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Mrs Gamble

With best Wishes

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LIFE AND THE WAY THROUGH

Life and the Way Through

BY THE
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FOREWORD

So considerable a portion of this book has been planned or written whilst I am enjoying the generous hospitality of my friends, Lord and Lady Kinnaird, at their beautiful Scottish home, that it is natural and delightful to inscribe it to them with warm affection and sincere admiration of all the holy activities which are ever issuing from their lives to make the way through this world easier for multitudes of pilgrims.

F. B. MEYER.

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" At noon a shower had fallen, and the clime
Breathed sweetly, and upon a cloud there lay
One more sublime in beauty than the Day,
Or all the sons of Time;

" A gold harp had he, and was singing there
Songs that I yearn'd to hear; a glory shone
Of rosy twilights in his cheeks—a zone
Of amaranth on his hair.

" He sang of joys to which the earthly heart
Hath never beat; he sang of deathless youth,
And of the throne of Love, Beauty, and Truth
Meeting no more to part;

" He sang lost Hope, faint Faith, and vain Desire
Crown'd there; great works, that on the earth began
Accomplished; towers impregnable to man
Scaled with the speed of fire;

" Of Power, and Life, and winged Victory
He sang; of bridges strown 'twixt star and star—
And hosts all arm'd in light for bloodless war
Pass and repass on high;

" Lo! in the pauses of his jubilant voice
He leans to listen: answers from the spheres,
And mighty pæans thundering he hears
Down the empyreal skies;

" Then suddenly he ceased—and seemed to rest
His goodly-fashioned arm upon a slope
Of that fair cloud, and with soft eyes and hope
He pointed towards the West;

" And shed on me a smile of beams, that told
Of a bright World beyond the thunder-piles
With blessed fields, and hills, and happy isles,
And citadels of gold."

F. Tennyson.

LIFE AND THE WAY THROUGH

INTRODUCTION

WHICH is the more important—to know the end of life or the way through? At the first glance one might suppose that it was all-important to be acquainted with the end or goal of life. How can we choose our path over the mountains, as we forgather at the dawn on the village green, unless the night before we have settled on our destination? To a young man standing on life's threshold it is natural enough to say: "What are you going to be? What is your objective? What are you aiming at? Make everything converge towards that object. Count every moment lost that does not help you towards it." Was not such a thought in the mind of the Apostles when they said to the Master: "Lord, we know not *whither* Thou goest, and *how* can we know the way?"

But here is the difficulty. Many of us have not the inkling of an idea as to the end to which to direct our steps. Some happy souls, by their birth or by some special impulse com-

municated to them, seem to have the responsibility of decision taken out of their control. A voice called to them in early childhood. The idiosyncrasy of their mental bent determined their orbit. Before they saw their first sunrise, they seem to have been commissioned for some high quest. The ship, in some cases, sailed with sealed orders, but as soon as the coastline faded the predestined port was known. But these are the exceptions. For most lives the future does not disclose itself. "We know not what we shall be." For all of us who are in such a plight the profound teaching of Jesus is of priceless value. He says in effect that it is more important to know the way than the end. He does not deny that there is a distinct purpose in every human life. He does not deny that each of us was meant to reach a bourne, to do a work, to fulfil some item in the vast scheme of Providence; but He says that this is not the most important matter. So long as we take the right way we shall reach a satisfying and useful end. We shall not find our life to have failed. Follow the way! Be loyal to truth! Be faithful to opportunity! Expend yourself for others, and, as the path develops, it will climb, and the mountain glories will untold, and the goal will become always clearer of view.

This is very comforting, because even in those cases where life seems to have been predestined for a specific purpose, it often happens that we are prevented from realising it. We are liable to the intrusion of very startling and sometimes very unwelcome surprises. It may be that through paralysing sickness, or through the death of some one who proposed to provide the shelter and help that our life-course required, or through an unexpected change of fortune, we are thrown off the chosen track of our life. Immediately we are bewildered, sore vexed, inclined to be angry with the Almighty, and tempted to renounce all further care and effort. Yet how often such an experience has proved to be either a call of God to a truer conception of our ideal, or a swifter, shorter way to it ? When the waters of the Nile find themselves blocked by the new dam which modern engineers have placed across their passage towards the sea, is it not conceivable that they greatly resent their diversion to the wastes of sand which for long centuries have lain bare and desolate ? But are they not amply repaid by their opportunity ? Who shall say that they have failed ? And when at last they are able to make their way to the bosom of the deep, to lie there for a little ere drawn up again to start on their vast cloud-journey, it must

be with the satisfaction that they have finished the work which was given them to do.

Thus will it be with all who will take the right way through life. There may be the ups of achievement and the downs of disappointment; there may be Transfiguration gleams and Gethsemane shadows; but we shall win through, and shall not have lived in vain. The main consideration, therefore, is to centre our thoughts on the way through.

We desire not only to get through life, but to do so in the best way possible. Not scourged through as felons; not driven through as slaves; not dragged through at the tails of wild horses; but as those who have learned the secret of noble living—a secret which is applicable to all temperaments and conditions, a talisman of victory over the most terrific odds, a clue which shall thread the maze, and conduct the soul from out of the darkness of life's catacomb to stand beneath the open heavens, where we no longer behold through a glass darkly, but face to face.

I

THERE IS A WAY THROUGH

How often is the question asked by the motorist or pedestrian in a new country, where the road becomes worse, or the path more indistinct over the moor, "Can I get through?" or, "Is there a way, and will it bring me out?" We may well ask that question of life. Is there any purpose in it all? Are we going anywhere? And, if so, is this the right track that we have taken?

One day Schopenhauer strayed into the Royal Gardens at Berlin; and when the official inquired, "Who are you?" the philosopher replied: "I don't know; I shall be glad if you can tell me." The official reported him for a lunatic. But he was far from that. The only difficulty with him was that he had deeply pondered on the mystery of human life, and was bewildered with the perplexity of the problem. Similarly, if the question were put to vast numbers of people, "Quo vadis?" (*Whither are you going?*), they would return the same reply: "I don't know; I shall be glad if you can tell me." Such people resemble

a bewildered child, standing on a platform in a railway centre like Finsbury Park or Clapham Junction. They know not how they came there, or whence; they have no idea whither the long parallel metals lead; they hear the trains thundering past, but what it all means, and which of them they should take, is a mystery they cannot solve.

Some hold the policy of drift.—They are like a water-logged vessel on the ocean, or the flotsam and jetsam which drift aimlessly to and fro between our London bridges. Without an idea of their destination, like the prophet, they go down to the nearest port, pay their fare, and go aboard the first boat that is leaving the quay, and take their chance whether they land East or West, and whether the boat is a merchantman or a man-of-war.

Others hold the policy of pleasure.—Their one idea is to have a good time, placing their own construction on the phrase, according to their predilections. In his essay on George Eliot, Lilly reminds us of the question put by Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, who inquires: "Do not our lives consist of the four elements?" And to whom Sir Andrew Aguecheek replies: "Faith, so they say, but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking." The quotation is followed up by a

picture of everyday existence sketched by another hand:

> "What is the course of the life
> Of mortal men on the earth?
> Most men eddy about
> Here and there—eat and drink,
> Chatter and love and hate,
> Gather and squander, are raised
> Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
> Striving blindly, achieving
> Nothing; and then they die—
> Perish! and no one asks
> Who or what they have been,
> More than he asks what waves
> In the moonlit solitude wild
> Of the midmost ocean have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment, and gone."

A miserable policy of life, surely, for which no thoughtful person can cherish an atom of desire!

Others adopt the policy of fatalism.—For them, as for the Moslem, it is always *Kismet.* They were born under an unlucky star. It is always their fate to meet with disappointment and trouble. If their investments turn out badly, or their home is visited with a run of sickness, or a murrain takes their cattle, and a fire burns down their house, their one creed is that their lot fell out of the wrong side of the jar—it cannot be helped! Their

favourite book in Scripture is Ecclesiastes. The earlier chapters are as well worn in their Bible as Isaiah xl. or John xiv. in that of the simple cottager of whom Cowper tells. These verses contain the main articles of their creed : " That which hath been is that which shall be : all things are full of weariness : as it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen to me ; O, why was I not more wise ? What hath a man of all his labour, for all his days are but sorrow and his travail is grief. This also is vanity."

But none of these policies can satisfy the thoroughly healthy soul. Their appeal is incompatible with its nobler instincts and intuitions, especially when they are quickened by a great inspiration from above.

In an interesting snatch of autobiography, Mark Rutherford tells us that when he was a good way past middle life he became the possessor of a large astronomical telescope. He confesses that he was little better than a star-gazing amateur, who might have been regarded as an object of contempt by the youngest assistant in the Nautical Almanac office. He set to work, however, unaided, set up and adjusted his instrument, and was soon able to find any star within its range. Almost every clear night he spent hours in simply looking, with never-failing wonder. He says :

"When I went into the observatory on a winter's night, when I shut the door, opened the roof, and set the driving clock going, the world and its cares were forgotten. How could they be remembered in the presence of Perseus, as he slowly came into view, falling westward across the sky, mysterious, awful, beautiful, without hurry, rest, acceleration, or delay!"

Later on he bought a spectroscope, and was enabled to see what he held to be almost the most tremendous spectacle in the universe —flames of glowing gas shooting up thousands of miles from the body of the sun like volcanic explosions. In the light of such a spectacle, he felt that the pretensions and self-importance of man were reduced to absurdity for their almost entire irrelevance.

The inspiration that came to Mark Rutherford may come to us from other sources; but from whatever source, the mind which is thus healthily and divinely energised cannot imagine that it alone, of all the wonderful universe of which it forms a part, is a creature without aim or purpose, chart or course, an amœba floating on the ocean, the sport of chance or fate. All around, and especially in the marvellous constitution of the body, there are many and manifest traces of design: surely,

there is design in the sending forth of the human soul which will justify the wise goodness of the Almighty. "Thou has made man a little lower than the angels, but Thou hast planted that in him, which enables him to measure himself against Orion."

This has always been the conviction of those strong and healthy souls that have led the march of the generations of mankind. They may have often been sorely perplexed with the rebuffs they met with, the blind alleys that attracted them, but from which they had to retrace their steps, and the many contradictions and problems with which they were confronted; but they have never surrendered the faith that there was a purpose in life, that there was a way marked out for them to tread, a mission to fulfil, a high calling which called to them from the upper skies, and which they dared not refuse.

The instances of this fill our library shelves, but we may take for example two comparatively recent ones, of men in many respects very diverse in temperament and experience.

In Sir Walter Scott's diary for 1827, when, amid his terrible misfortunes, he actually contemplated taking refuge in the Isle of Man or in the sanctuary of Holyrood to escape his merciless creditors, there occurs this entry:

" But I will not let this unman me. Our hope, heavenly and earthly, is poorly anchored if the cable parts upon the stream. I believe in God, who can change evil into good, and I am confident that what befalls us is always ultimately for the best."

And the late Bishop Francis Paget wrote : " I think, as I look back upon my life, that there is hardly a single thwarting of my wishes, hardly a single instance where things seemed to go against me, in which I cannot even now see that, by God's profound mercy, they really went for me all the while. So that if I could have looked forward only so far as the time now present, I should have longed for and welcomed all those things which I have feared and grudgingly accepted. . . . There is nothing that God does not work into His perfect plan of our lives. All lives converge, all movements tend to do His will, on earth as in heaven."

But from ordinary experiences, we turn to the Master, who, throughout His life, was conscious of its purpose and plan, and of the way which led Him through the years. " The Son can do nothing of Himself," He said on one memorable occasion, " He can only do what He sees the Father doing ; for whatever He does, that the Son does also in like manner ;

and greater deeds than these will He reveal unto Him." There was no break or pause in that fellowship between the Father and Himself in His great progress from Bethlehem to the Ascension Mount; and, therefore, with absolute truth, at the close, He was able, on the review of His earthly career, to say: "I have done perfectly the work which, by Thine appointment, it was Mine to do." For Him also there was a goal to be reached, a mission to be accomplished; He trod the perfect way of fellowship and obedience; and though to human eyes it might have appeared as though His days were cut short by an untimely death, He knew that the Temple of His Life-work stood complete to the topmost stone. From the first He knew that He must be about His Father's business, that He was sent to cast fire on the earth, and to be baptised with a baptism of blood. Each step of the ways that threaded Palestine, whether to the Well of Sychar, the summit of the Mount of Beatitudes, or the descent from the Mount of Transfiguration, had been marked out for His most blessed feet, from before the foundation of the world. The sweet path that led to Martha's home on Olivet, and the *via dolorosa* that led to the Cross, were alike traced on the map of His pilgrimage between the manger-bed of Beth-

lehem and the summit of the Mount of the Ascension. There was no accident, no room for the intrusion of unanticipated emergencies, no foothold for fortuitous circumstances. The Son of Man went as it was written of Him. He was delivered to each incident of His career by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And what was true of the Son of Man, whose life sums up and contains all human experiences, is equally true of all. This is the universal teaching of that compendium of universal biography—the Bible. According to its teaching each soul is a poem, each a study; each a distinct creation, as really as that of the flower in all its glory or the planet which swings around the sun. Each individual may, in a modified sense, appropriate those great words of Christ : " For this cause was I born, and for this I came into the world." Not only were the lives of Abraham and David, of Cyrus and Daniel, of Augustine and Luther necessary to the fulfilling of the Divine programme, but yours and mine are. There must be pawns on the chess-board as well as kings and queens. If the planets are balanced with such nicety that the mountains have to be weighed in scales and the hills in a balance, surely man, who lives at the central point of eternities and

immensities, must be here for a purpose. He is no phantom child flung up on time's beach by the vagaries of the infinite ocean. What is true of the race as a whole is obviously true of each individual unit, and, therefore, we may thoughtfully and reverently adopt, each one, that great sentence of Fichte: "It is most certain, and, indeed, the ground of all other certainty, that the moral order of the world exists—that for every intelligent being there is an appointed work which he is expected to perform, and that every circumstance of his life is a part of a plan."

The Christians of the First Era were never weary of talking of "the Way." It was one of the commonplaces of their speech, and in its use they implied that there was a beginning and an end, a gate of entrance and a goal of accomplishment, a purpose, a direction, and an end. Before Paul had formulated his great arguments for Justification, or Peter had elaborated his plea for a Divine patience, or John had built up his treatise on the Love of God as grafted on to human hearts, the simple folk who had entered through the Beautiful Gate into the Temple of a New Age, spoke of Christianity as the Way everlasting, along which, as by a causeway spanning a morass, the soul might safely make its momentous

passage across the quaking quagmires of this transitory scene.

It is needless to cite more than a few of these many references. "This," said the Apostle, "I confess unto thee, that after *the Way* I serve the God of our fathers": "Felix had more exact knowledge concerning the Way": "There arose no small stir about the Way."

But as is the universal so is the particular. It is not enough to speak generally about the way, we must believe in it for ourselves, and dare to act on the assumption that He who by a mysterious leading conducts the migratory birds in their yearly passage from their northern feeding grounds to the sunny south, flying so far above us, night and day, that we cannot catch the babel of their many voices, is leading each of us by a way, even though it is a way that we know not, not having passed it heretofore, which will bring us through and out on those bright tablelands where God Himself is Sun. "And I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb, are the Temple of it. And the nations of the saved walk in the light of it."

There is a way through life for each of us, to take which is to have fulfilled the purpose of our being, to keep which is to attain the

maximum of blessedness within our reach, The mystic caught sight of it when he spoke of *Via crucis, via lucis ;* and Bunyan described it in his matchless allegory. But, of course we may miss it, or be allured from it, or may stumble and maim ourselves by taking another and apparently parallel, though more tortuous or precipitous track. " Remember Lot's wife ! "

It is essential, then, that we should not only believe that there is a way through life, but that we should secure a guide in whose sure knowledge our ignorance may confide absolutely, and in whose mighty hand our weakness may become strong when the head turns dizzy and the feet are about to slide.

II

THE GUIDING HAND

Who that has once witnessed it can ever forget the scene in the front of a Swiss mountain hotel, where in the early morning guides are waiting to be engaged, or to fulfil the appointment made on the previous evening. There they are with their bronzed faces and their lithe, well-knit frames, with their alpenstocks, ropes, and other appliances, with their keen sight and deft hands. Many men of their class have imperilled and sacrificed their lives for their charges, and there is little doubt that any of these would cheerfully do the same were it required. You select your guide, chat pleasantly among the lower gradients, listen to his yarns, consult his weather forecasts, gladly take his hand as you cross the glaciers, not afraid of their crevasses, blue with distance, allow him to rope you at a dangerous point, and trust him when the mist suddenly enwraps you in its clammy veil, or night begins to darken on the cold white mountains.

Life is a climb across the mountains, from the ice-clad slopes of Switzerland to the vine-

clad slopes of Italy. There is a way over, but it is foolish and foolhardy to attempt it without a guide. There is a guide for each human soul, but the strange condition of his assistance is that he shall be unseen. Lord Tennyson expected to see his Pilot, face to face, only after he had crossed the bar! He who comes to us in life's early morning, saying, "I am the Way," is one of whom it is true that not having seen we love.

But though we see Him not, and frequently refuse to avail ourselves of His help, He is ever beside us, often interposing His unsolicited and timely help when we had almost come to grief through our headstrong follies. When we ascend into the heavens of earthly bliss and happiness, we find Him there; when we descend into the depths of mortal misery and despair, we find Him there; when we take the wings of life's morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of Western lands, through their unexplored distances, we discover that His hand leads and His right hand upholds. Even when we think that the darkness must have enshrouded us from His finding, we suddenly hear His secret whisper amid the impenetrable gloom, and are aware of His fragrant breath upon our cheek; yea, the night is luminous, and the darkness is as the day.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, and we cannot attain to it.

When we speak of this universal Presence it reminds us of the words which Virgil uses in another sense: "Myself will lead thee, when the sun has kindled the heat of noon, when the grass is athirst and the shade now grows more grateful to the flock, until thou comest to the old man's covert, his retreat from the weary waves."

It is this guiding Presence that comes to all men in Christ, who is the true Light which enlighteneth everyone coming into the world. For some that Light shines more clearly than for others. For some it is a glow-worm's spark; for others it resembles that star which shone clearly in the water that Dante passed on his way to find the Rose of Paradise. But to some extent, and in some measure, Christ speaks in every human breast. To those who never knew Him after the flesh, He came at sundry times and in divers manners, by the voices of Nature, of religious teachers, and of the heart, but to us in the unmistakable revelation, with which as Christianity He has enriched mankind. To all He says: "I am the Way, . . . He that followeth Me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Wherefore, we may say boldly: "The Lord

is my Light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ? "

Though we cannot see our Guide, it is essential that we should be in constant touch with Him amid the various incidents of daily life. Our fingers, though they be as the fingers of blind men, must be in perpetual contact with His, as we handle the same affairs. It is under such a condition that He can fulfil His own promise : " I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and lead them in paths that they have not known. . . . I will go before them, and make the crooked places straight, and the rough places smooth. . . . These things will I do unto them and not forsake them."

This condition, however, is so important that we must in a few more sentences set it out. Every occurrence in life has an outward and inward value. The outer has to do with the objective, our environment of time and space ; whereas the inner has to do with the subjective and subliminal, which speaks in the heart, and is connected with the Eternal and Infinite. The real significance of all that happens to us must, therefore, be approached from within. Directly we perceive this profound truth, and enter into the inner meaning and

essential nature of the endless series of events that pass before us like the film of a cinematograph—we get near our Guide!

In 1897 the Egypt Exploration Fund discovered a single page of a book, recording some reputed sayings of Jesus which do not appear in any of the Gospels. The best-known and most striking of these Logia is: "Raise the stone, and there thou shalf find me; cleave the wood, and there am I"—a saying which was paraphrased in *Scribner's Magazine* in the following lines:

"Where the many toil and suffer
There am I among my own;
Where the tired workman sleepeth
There am I with him alone:
Never more thou needest seek me,
I am with thee everywhere;
Raise the stone and thou shalt find me,
Cleave the wood, and I am there."

These words affirm the truth which, when its significance is properly appreciated, will transform life. Our daily experiences will have a new meaning so soon as we learn to associate them with the presence and fellowship of Jesus Christ. Get to the inner secret of the stone and the wood! We may do this because it is as true now as at the first moment of creation, that in Him all things

are being made, and that in Him all things consist. Behind the form and breath of every flower, behind the waving beauty of the glorious forests, behind the strength of the hills and the many waves of the seas, behind the fair expanse of the heavens and the bewitching calm of a summer's eve, behind the beauty and innocence of a little child, behind everything and everyone, if you reach down below the outward appearance and crust you will come at last to the presence and love and guidance of Him who is the First-begotten from the dead and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth. At the heart of all that happens to us, our finger-tips may touch His. As we live deeply we have fellowship with His Spirit. Nothing ever befalls us at the core of which we cannot find Him. In the centre of every whirlwind of trouble, in the glowing heart of every furnace of fire, in the interior of every house of sorrow, in the holy place of every bereavement, at the pivot and focus of each responsibility, below the rough surface of every irksome duty, we shall always find the Word of God, whose glory was reflected in the days of His flesh on the waters of the Galilean lake, when it shone through the curtains of His humanity. Whilst we realise this, and keep in touch

with Him, we advance along the predestined path to its goal.

The same truth may be illustrated in another way. One of the finest woman-intellects of the present day is Helen Keller's. But on account of the darkening of her sight, to say nothing of other senses, it would never have emerged had not one devoted woman given herself absolutely to the awakening and unfolding of the imprisoned mind. For years they were inseparable companions, and all correspondence between the outward world and Miss Keller's soul was maintained through her friend's patient and devoted mediation. They were always dealing with each other in regard to every incident of daily experience. Transfer that conception to the intercourse between the human soul and Christ, and it must be instantly apparent to the dullest intelligence what a new zest and fascination will stream through to the soul which learns that it need not withdraw itself from the objective world into a hermit's cell, but may find its discipline, its incentive, its joy and crown of rejoicing, in an unbroken fellowship with Christ, along the prosaic and ordinary course of life.

So we shall come to the City of God. There is a strange story in the Old Testa-

ment of an army being conducted to a distant city by the personal leadership of the prophet. They seem to have been mesmerised in some strange fashion, so that they thought less of the way they took than of the presence of their guide, and he led them into the city. "And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that, Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold they were in the midst of Samaria." Similarly—though the parallel does not perfectly hold, because Samaria was a hostile city—those of us who occupy ourselves with Christ, whom not having seen we love, and who in our blindness resign ourselves to His leadership, will one day discover that in our devotion to Him we have made progress along the Way, and at last find ourselves amid the solemn troops and sweet societies of the City of God.

III

THE JEWELLED GATE

We are speaking and thinking of the ideal way through life, and naturally, since we are sure that there is such a way, it is of prime importance to find the gate. It may well be called the Beautiful Gate of the Temple of Life, and when the sun shines on it, as we view it in the retrospect, it flashes as though it were wrought of burnished gold and set with glistening jewels. The arch of Hope is supported on the two pillars of Faith and Love.

(1) FAITH

The first symptom of the awakening of the Spirit is *faith*. This to the soul is what the senses of the body are to a new-born child. Through the open gates of sight and touch, of the ear, the nostril, and the tongue, the outer world begins to stream in on the soul, which has just arrived from the Infinite. Similarly, it is through faith that the influences from the Divine and the Infinite begin to stream in upon the soul. As the senses are recipients of the one, so is faith of the other.

As the impressions of the outer world received through the senses are certain and sufficient, so by faith the soul is certified of the existence of a spiritual world in which it lives and moves and has its being.

Faith is that faculty of the human spirit through which it perceives, and by which it welcomes, those uprushes and inrushes from the spiritual realm which supply a new and wonderful dynamic to such as are willing to pay the price. Just as our wide-awake consciousness throws open our nature to receive through the senses the impact of things material, so through faith we throw open our nature to receive the impact of the Eternal and Infinite; and instantly tidal waves begin to pour up the estuaries, from which the sand-bars have been dredged out, and there is a silence in the heart as when the Severn meets the babbling Wye. The moment when this contact is first made is what we know as conversion. In conversion we first perceive, with the wonder of discovery, that there need be no barrier between us and the Eternal Holiness and Love. We choose that on our side there shall be none, and thenceforward reckon that there is none. Then, as the life-stream enters, it is with us as with the far stretches of the

Soudan into which, but the other day, the Nile waters were diverted. Forthwith the desert begins to rejoice and wrap her nakedness around with living verdure.

In his natural condition man is separated from the life of God by a great rampart of rock, like that which separates Tibet from the plains of Northern India. Led by an unerring impulse, he sets to work to penetrate that wall, as, in constructing the Mont Cenis tunnel, the engineers wrought with pickaxe and explosives from the northern slopes of the Alps. He knows that he belongs not to the winter but the summer, not to the bleak snow-peaks but the warm sunlit plains, which lie under the kiss of perpetual sunshine. Then, as he works on through the darkness, he becomes suddenly aware of the dull thud which comes from the other side of the intervening rocky barrier. It is clear that Another is working towards him. The blows become increasingly resonant, until the last stroke breaks an aperture through the remaining film and he stands face to face with his fellow-worker, and his dazzled eyes gaze on the far-spread panorama. That moment of rapture, when the last barrier falls, and we see the Christ stand, is the moment of illumination. It is the moment

of vision, of revelation, of the certainty of assurance, and the demonstration of things not seen by unanointed eyes.

Perhaps the most wonderful revelation of all is that, at that moment, the soul suddenly perceives that through all its past the Divine Comforter and Guide has been working and moving towards it. Though the human has not sought the Divine, the Divine has sought the human. The Almighty Lover has not only been waiting on the sunlit slopes for the emergence of the seeker, but has been inspiring and conducting his efforts, timing the hour, and determining with more than mathematic exactitude the plane of approach. Thus, as we follow on, we come to know the Lord, whose going forth is prepared as the morning.

To state the fact in the terms of modern philosophy—in Conversion religious conceptions, ideals, forces, that had previously lain on the outer rim of the soul, hardly recognised and seldom used, take the central place, and become the driving forces of a new life. The soul scraps its old machinery and procures new. It exchanges candle-light for electric, and horse-power for petrol. It begins to avail itself of forces that belong to higher planes of existence. It is dead

to the lower, and keenly alive to the higher. In other words, it is born out of the limitations that cramped it into the liberty of the sons of God.

This makes a vast difference. Dr. Starbuck finds analogies in other directions, which, though of a lower order, may serve to illustrate the greatness of the change. An athlete, for instance, may for years go on perfecting his knowledge of the rules of the game and adding to his muscular development; but there may come a day when all at once he ceases to play the game, and the game plays itself through him. He loses himself in some great contest, and stands no longer in need of the applause of the arena.

A preacher may have perfect command of his art; his every sentence may flash with brilliance of thought and expression; his sermons may extort the ungrudging admiration alike of masters in theology and professors of rhetoric, yet he may not attain to the front rank in his profession until one day he casts aside his MSS. and rules of art before an overmastering rush of inspired eloquence. Poets, too, have been conscious of moments when they were lifted into a plane of freedom and power which previously had been absolutely beyond their reach.

Wagner had been a musician before that sublime moment when his genius was awoke by a strain of Mendelssohn. Many a young girl, though she has spent years in patient study and practice, may still be conscious that she has not yet gained glow, passion, and the soul of music ; but one day, apparently unsought, the entire secret is made known, the divine ecstasy falls on her, and from that hour she sways the souls of her audiences as by a spell. These are illustrations culled from other realms, but they are as moonlight to sunlight, when compared with the full glory of Conversion.

In her illuminating book on " Religious Genius," * Miss Swetenham has, therefore, abundant warrant for saying that to the religiously inspired man " Conversion is the great central event of life." We agree with her that this unique and wondrous experience burns itself into his memory, so that his soul glows with it for years afterwards. He knows that it was no fleeting impression, that it was not a light-footed fancy, touching with slight foot-prints the yielding sands, to be instantly obliterated by the returning wave ; but that it was a divine act, imparting a divine radiance, and empowering

* Hodder and Stoughton.

with a divine energy. It was the moment when the soul was filled with God-consciousness, so that what had been dead lived and what had been content with the surface of things found itself.

* * * * *

The Materialist knows nothing of all this. He lives only on the one side of his nature that looks out on the material and natural. What wonder that he is bewildered! His senses exclude more than they reveal of the vast environing universe. He resembles our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, whose windows were made of horn; or the Japanese, who make them of paper. If we use our physical senses only, we are like Hagar, the Egyptian slave-girl, as she viewed the sand-wastes around her, but failed to descry the fountain of water; or like Balaam, who beheld the high walls of the vineyards on either side, but missed the vision of the Angel, which even his ass saw; or like the prophet's servant, who was dismayed at the spectacle of the enemy's hosts that engirdled the city, but was oblivious to the horses and chariots of fire that formed an inner cordon of protection. There are *eyes* and *eyes*—the eyes of the physical sense, which behold the objects

of their own sphere, with marvellous keenness and accuracy; but only the inner eye is able to discern the things which God hath prepared.

The materialist, therefore, is much to be pitied. He refuses everything for which he cannot get mathematical proof, takes nothing on trust, and refuses to trouble himself with anything outside the cognisance of his senses. Who knows anything beyond this world? he argues. Here at least there are matters we can understand and be sure of. Here are deserts to be irrigated, waste lands to be reclaimed, slums to be destroyed, garden cities to be created, facilities to be obtained for education and recreation. Let us make new conditions of life; thus we shall regenerate society. It is a disappointing *Credo*, for the whole experience of the past goes to prove that no amount of whitening on the sepulchre will resuscitate the dead. And the soul of its professor becomes dwarfed and starved, as he pursues his work under starless skies. In his literature, it has been truly said, there is no poetry; in his music no hymn; in his architecture no cloister; in his soul no prayer; no altar lamp to keep the watch; no still small voice in Horeb's cave

Materialism shouts question after question into the Cave of Destiny, but listens with the wrong ear for the reply. It waits at the wrong wharf for the returning ship. Therefore the disciples of this dreary system profess themselves worshippers at the shrine of an everlasting No. Thus the fair garden of life becomes a grim desert, filled with the howling of wild beasts or the groans of hate-filled despair. There is no pillar of cloud by day, no pillar of fire by night. The universe is without form and void, and no brooding spirit moves on the face of the deep. Natural law is just one huge, immeasurable steam-engine, rolling on in dead indifference to grind men limb from limb.

But the position of the materialist is becoming less and less tenable as science pursues its researches in these remarkable years. The findings of modern investigation are more and more in the direction of the spiritual nature of things which appear most substantial. In fact, the very rocks are fluid.

Sir William Ramsay, for instance, discovered recently that if an electric discharge is passed through a vacuum tube containing a little hydrogen, two rare gases appear—helium and neon. These can be produced by the recomposition of hydrogen atoms, or

by the action of the electrical force out of nothing at all. Referring to these experiments, an acute observer, who probably would not rank himself with the Church, says: "It is the very nemesis of materialism to discover that the solid atoms on which it has built are not material at all. But if there be no such thing as matter, materialism would appear to be only the latest of many superstitions. Modern chemistry doubts whether there is such a thing as matter, which has a birth, a life, and a death, but a death which leaves no corpse to bury. It looks as though Sir William Ramsay and his fellow-chemists had succeeded in building atoms out of the raw material of atoms, which are not material things at all, but only a mode of energy."

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The creed of materialism, therefore, cannot satisfy, and we are amply justified in obeying the direction of those higher instincts of the human mind, which prompt towards the Unseen Holy, and asseverate the existence of the Everlasting Father. Whenever there is an instinct, there is a reality to meet it. For the migrating bird there is the sunny south; for the babe the

mother's breast ; for the soul, bewildered and blind, a Hand to lead it along a path which it cannot see, but which is as clearly marked as the paths which, from times immemorial, have been trodden by the natives in uncivilised lands.

Thomas Carlyle was kept from drifting because of his tight hold on two great elementary truths—the first, that God reveals Himself to the spirit ; and the second, that it is always right to do right.

"If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And heard an ever breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep ;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."

The reasonings of mind and heart are confirmed, as we have seen, by Scripture and experience. There *is* a way through life, though man's blindness may grope for it in vain ; and there is a hand that will lead the faltering feet of the pilgrim to find his home. The one inexorable condition for all of us is that we should be willing to be led. There *is* a path, and our Father sees it clearly, though we cannot, for

we are fools and blind. We cannot even see our Guide, but He is near. The pressure of His hand is upon ours, and His voice speaks in the silence of the soul. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

"Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Faith may, then, be described as *the sixth* sense. It is the comprehensive term for all the senses of our spiritual nature—that part of us which opens out on the eternal world, and is made sensitive and operative by conversion. The new birth is the issuing of the soul from the cramping, confining conditions of its origin into the width and space of the spiritual and eternal; and to the twice-born soul, Faith is as natural and inevitable as sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste are to the new-born babe. We are—we repeat—perfectly justified, therefore, in relying on the affirmation of Faith. As Emerson puts it: "They who believe have an access to the secrets and structure of Nature by some better method than experience." What is this except to say that Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.

We cannot but recall those great words of William James, in one of the closing pages of "The Varieties of Religious Experience": "The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although, in the main, their experiences and those of this world keep distinct, yet the two become contiguous at certain points, and higher energies filter in. By being faithful in my poor measure to this over-belief, I seem to myself to keep more sane and true. I *can*, of course, put myself into the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imagine vividly that the world of sensations and of scientific laws and objects may be all. But whenever I do this, I hear that inward monitor of which W. K. Clifford once wrote, whispering the word 'Bosh!' Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name; and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow scientific bounds. Assuredly, the real world is of a different temperament—more intricately built than physical science allows."

The seat of Faith is in the heart, or, as we

would call it to-day, in the subliminal consciousness. This is our other and better self. It is the shaft driven through our being to the Infinite, at the antipodes of daily life. It is the orifice up which the fountain of life, concerning which Jesus spake to the woman, springs. But we must give time for the fussy activities of existence to subside, as the silt does when you let muddy water stand in its jar. What a contrast in the Rhone between entering and leaving the deep and quiet waters of Leman! The sub-conscious or subliminal must have time to assert itself, and, therefore, the early morning is the day's prime. The hubbub of the streets, even for Jesus, must yield to the morning silence of Olivet.

We must also watch against every evil thing that might detract from the singleness of our spiritual vision or the quickness of our response to the appeal of the unseen and eternal influences. It is only by continual watchfulness against the selfish and evil elements in our nature that we can keep the windows of the soul clean, and hold the heights that we have scaled with hard and incessant toil. When these conditions are preserved, the spirit will lie open to the south winds of God, wafting into the soul the fragrance of Paradise.

Such faith becomes the habitual attitude of the soul. It will not lead to a mischievous quietism. Indeed, none work so persistently and energetically as those who work out what God works in, and are aware of the pulse and throb of the divine life. Their only anxiety is lest they lose one ounce-weight of pressure through self-indulgence, indolence, or inattention. The soul must follow hard after God. "Then," to quote true and eloquent words, "the sense of God's presence will be with us in our going out and coming in, as a source of absolute repose and confident calm, securing us against terror and anxiety. From Him, as from a never-failing source, we shall be amply supplied, and we shall acquire the momentary habit, in all times of our tribulation, temptation, or wealth, of drawing upon His fullness, and grace upon grace."

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But it may be that this ideal seems an impossible one. It strikes my readers as too mystical and transcendental to serve them. It is high; they cannot attain to it. Then let us state the successive steps after another fashion, illustrating them from the great life of John the Baptist.

It will be remembered that there were

three marked phases in his experience. First, there was *the religion of tradition.* As soon as he awoke to the consciousness of his own being he found himself in a priest's home, with every thing around him that spoke of the traditions and aspirations of his people. Hard by was the cave of Machpelah, with its sacred dust ; not far away, Samson had wrought his mighty exploits ; nearly every valley had some reminiscence of David, either as the shepherd or the king. Whenever his father returned from the temple services there was much to hear of the holy psalmody, the solemn rites, the vast gatherings of the nation to worship the God of their fathers. The earliest ambition of the growing boy was to be permitted to participate in those splendid ceremonials. Under the tutelage of that aged pair, how could he do other than imbibe those high and holy influences? Thus, like his father and mother, he eagerly waited for the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of Israel.

Years passed, and brought great changes in that mountain-home. The son saw the darkening shadows draw over the two dear faces that had bent over him in childhood, and closed their eyes in the last sleep. Then he was free to live his own life. But the winnowing-fan was passing over the floor of his religious con-

victions, and he saw the hollowness of much of the traditional religion of his age. Already he had detected the poison that lay beneath the specious system of Pharisaism, and had seen how the people bolstered themselves up by the reflection, that whatever their lives might be, they yet had Abraham for their father, and must, therefore, be God's chosen. The hollowness and heartlessness of the religion of the day nauseated that ardent young spirit, and drove him into the desolate highland country, where he might live in direct contact with the elementary facts of Nature, God, and his own soul. The traditional piety of his boyhood was there exchanged for *the religion of Reality*. He built for himself, taught only by God, who spoke to him by the voices of the prophets, of the wild scenery of the wilderness, and of his own deep nature. The passion that burnt in his soul unquenchably was for Reality. He must get beneath shams and counterfeits, must bore to the virgin metal that lay below the accretions of tradition and ritual, must get at the facts of the eternal world for himself. And so he did. The effect was immediate, and whether he arrested caravans on their route to Jerusalem, or addressed the miners who wrought among the hills, it seemed as though in him that old promise was

fulfilled : " I will come near to judgment ; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right. . . . But who may abide the day of His coming, for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."

Immediately his message received a great response. Men who were tired of the hollowness and falsehood of their times streamed out to him from all the cities ; and the young men, specially, in the ardour of an unquenchable passion for righteousness, left their nets and boats, their sickles and pruning hooks, their homes and friends, in order to expose their lives to those heart-searching appeals.

But in the midst of this national awakening, when he swayed the hearts of men, from Herod on his throne to the Gentile soldiers of the Roman occupation, John was not satisfied. The voice that had spoken in his heart and sent him forth on his great mission assured him that he was not only to proclaim but personally to see and know the Coming One, whose shoe latchet he was unworthy to loose, and whose baptism would supersede his own as fire water. He looked

eagerly into every face for the visage of the Messiah, and watched after every baptism for the opened heavens and the descending dove. Six months passed. All the people were now baptised and were waiting expectantly. The committee of the Sanhedrin had come and gone with their questions, with no further satisfaction than the assurance that John was not the Christ; then, when patience had wrought her perfect work in the heart of the Forerunner, and as his own cousin, whom he had never recognised as the Coming One, came up out of the water, the promised sign was afforded, and he saw, and tasted, and handled of the Word of life, and his joy was fulfilled. For six weeks he kept his secret locked in his heart, and then, as he beheld the Christ coming towards him, with an unearthly glory on His face, the result of his triumph in the wilderness, the Baptist could contain himself no more, but cried, saying, "This is He of whom I spake." *His religion then had become one of direct and perfect vision.*

These same three phases are still experienced in the history of the soul, in its everlasting quest for truth. There is, first, the traditional stage. We believe because we were taught to believe, and accept without

questioning the facts which parents, teachers, and ministers of religion inculcate and enforce. The doctrines of the Christian Creed, the accepted theory of Inspiration, the distinctive tenets of that section of the Church to which our people are attached—these are accepted as part of the nature of things, not to be understood, or explained, or questioned, but accepted as final, authoritative, and satisfactory.

Then we experience a great awakening. We go up with our parents to the Temple, and find ourselves separated from them. They feel that they have lost us, they seek us sorrowing, they cannot understand that other considerations are appealing to us which seem of paramount importance. This is our Father's business. We must ask questions in the Temple shrine, whether the answers are satisfactory or not. Our soul is awake, our eyes are open ; we are specially keen to detect any evasions, superficiality, and hypocrisy, wherever they may be found, and especially among religious professors. We have started on our wander-year. We go through the world, hammer in hand, tapping every appearance to see whether it is solid or not. But at this moment, when we have drifted from our old moorings

and not found our new course, when we have razed our old home and not erected another, when we have sacrificed our ancient teachers without determining on others, we are exposed to very serious peril, and it is here that a few rules may be helpful:

First: be true to yourself and to what you have so far realised. Do not profess more than you have experienced, and certainly not less. Let your inner temper be neither convex nor concave, but like a pane of clear and even glass.

Second: never doubt that you will come out into perfect vision. He that is of the truth shall hear the voice of the King of Truth, and see His face. Though the vision tarry, wait for it; assuredly it will come and will not tarry.

Third: live up to your highest ideals. Be pure and humble. "It is of vast importance," says one of our greatest teachers, "whether the soul, which is to live for ever, is a truthful, pure, and noble soul, made strong through the conquest of many and great temptations; with affections set upon all that is good and beautiful; with a conscience that clearly sees the difference between right and wrong; and with a firm will, resolute to choose the right.

Fourth: If you cannot as yet accept Christ in the full-orbed glory which is set forth in the Epistles of St. John, begin where John himself began—as a disciple. A disciple is just a learner, one that enters the class of the famous teacher, and puts himself under the regimen and discipline which the Master prescribes. The mistake of so many in the present day is that, because they cannot accept the whole truth about our Lord, as set down in the creeds and formularies of the Church, therefore they turn away and will have nothing to do with Him. They are staggered at the conclusions to which they who sit in the upper forms have been brought, though they are commended by the highest ideals and noblest characters, and therefore they refuse to enter themselves as scholars and sit in the lowest form. To say the least, this course is very irrational. Christ does not ask us to accept a system of doctrine, but to become scholars and disciples under His regimen and instruction. He knows that our eyes cannot stand the sudden blaze of uncreated glory, and therefore tenders us the mellowed beauty of the human and natural. All He wants is that we should come and see. He will not answer our questions and unveil His secrets before

we have come; but afterwards all will be made clear. The order of the New Testament is, in a vast number of cases, the true order. We sit at Christ's feet and hear His words; are enamoured by His ideals and penetrated by the power of His utterance. We find that He is Himself the exemplar of all He teaches us to honour and cherish. We become more and more attached to Him, feel His spell, adopt His conceptions, appreciate them with a growing conviction; and then suddenly, when He drops the veil and tells us of great facts and truths which we could never have discovered, we are already acclimatised and prepared, and fall at His feet, saying: "The Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we may know."

Let us still further expand this thought, casting it into the form of a parable. Suppose that you become possessed of a motor-car. You have purchased it, or it has been given to you. Your next thought is to obtain a chauffeur who is acquainted not only with the great city in which you are living, and with every street of which you are familiar, but with the surrounding country, of which you are only partially acquainted. Among other applicants for the

situation, one man presents himself who says that he has a thorough knowledge not only of London, we will say, but of the adjacent counties. You engage him on trial that you may test the accuracy of this statement. On the first day you direct him to a certain building in a distant part of the city, and you know that he takes you by the most direct route. On the second day you indicate as your destination a point in quite another direction, and which requires a precise knowledge of the district in which it lies. You are keenly critical, but must admit that the congeries of small streets could not have been navigated with better skill. On the third day you resolve to go into one of the outlying counties—Essex or Cambridge, for example. You do not personally know the road, but your chauffeur gives no sign of hesitation, and goes straight by what, as you reflect on the matter, is evidently the most direct route. You at last say to yourself: "He took me so directly and expeditiously where I could test him, that now I will trust him, where my knowledge is at fault." You make final arrangements with this man, and he well repays your selection.

It is thus with faith in regard to higher

things. The young man grows away from the traditional religion which satisfied his parents, but which seems too narrow for himself. He wants to be sure for his own satisfaction, and to be strong in his convictions, because based on his personal experience. He cannot, we will suppose, accept the Deity of Christ, or the Doctrine of the Atonement, or the supreme claim of Scripture; but as he views the effect that Christianity has had on the world, and hears those whom he respects talk of Christ with a unique reverence and affection, he resolves that he will enter as a pupil of the great Master—so far, at least, as His moral precepts are concerned. At the outset Christ says to him: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God—*Be pure.*" From that hour he examines every truant desire that craves admission to his fancy; he turns away from suggestive pictures and books; he avoids the old companionships which stank like an open sepulchre. He pursues this regimen for some weeks, and discovers not only that he has a sense of inward happiness, of which he had never before tasted, but that his vision of the unseen and divine is greatly clarified. He sees the eternal snow-peaks peering through

the mists that hitherto had always veiled them.

After awhile he returns to the Master and asks for further instruction, and the Master says: "Give and it shall be given you; with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again—*Live to give.*" Again he applies himself to his task. Hitherto he has been self-contained, inclined to hoard, uncommunicative, and close. But he alters the whole method of life, and becomes as a running brook which is ever pouring forth to meet all the needs that call on its supplies. A new smile is on his face, a new freedom in his manner, a new self-forgetfulness, a new ministry. What is the result? The beautiful old words are fulfilled in his daily experience. "When the ear hears his footstep, then it blesses him; and when the eye beholds his coming, it gives witness. The blessing of him that is ready to perish comes upon him. His glory is fresh upon him, and his bow is renewed in his hand." He has again verified the trustworthiness of Christ, testing him in a department of life which is well within his cognisance.

In following days other and always more intimate words are spoken. There is no "Yea" and "Nay," but certainty, pre-

cision, urgency. He begins to understand and appreciate Christ's great system, and as he does His will he knows more and more of the doctrine. His climb up the hill of obedience unfolds to him further and further panoramas of truth. Things which had puzzled him are unravelled, and he often wonders that they could have been stumbling-blocks in his path. His admiration and loyalty are always on the increase; but as yet the Master has not introduced matters beyond his pupil's range.

One day, however, He says: "Let us spend a day together on the high mountains." Right gladly the young man accepts the invitation. He can hardly sleep on the preceding night for very joy. The thought that the Master cares to expend on him His time and care is full of inexpressible delight. At dawn he is ready, and they begin to climb. When they have gained a considerable height, and are resting at a spot where the scenery presents a surpassing grandeur and loveliness, a light steals over the Master's face which imparts a heavenly beauty, as He says, "I and My Father are One." Almost involuntarily the pupil falls at His feet, saying: "Ah, my Master and Friend, here I cannot verify Thy words by my poor ex-

perience, but I trust Thee. I found Thee true in regions where I could discover for myself the accuracy and helpfulness of Thy words, and now I take this great saying of Thine to my heart, and accept it as the Truth."

A little higher in the ascent the Master says: "This is My blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins." Again the disciple says: "Here again I cannot verify Thy words from my experience, but on Thy testimony I accept them as the truth."

Thus Christ unfolds the truths of His Evangel to receptive souls until they fall at His feet with Thomas's confession. Was not this the method He adopted with the fishermen of Galilee? Could He have expected John or Peter to accept the statements which they themselves made afterwards in their Epistles? It would not have been possible. Not even His miraculous deeds could have lifted them to those high levels. They had to associate with Him in daily intercourse, to watch Him in His hours of retirement, to rely on Him in days of opposition and nights of storm, and so they were gradually fitted to receive and transmit the Faith, once for all delivered to the Church.

But let it be ever remembered that our

faith will grow just in proportion as we are daily surmounting some higher peak of difficulty, treading under foot some insidious evil, refusing some pleasant temptation for the truth's sake, allowing ourselves to be swept out of ourselves by love, and giving ourselves to such high labours as shall test and strain our moral muscles and elicit the completest response of spiritual faculty.

To sum up: Faith may be said to be the soul's Intuition of Christ, as the Solvent of all difficulty and the Absolver and Antidote of Sin. The heart first discovers its affinity with Him; and the head thereafter formulates the science and doctrine. But whatever happens about these, and however long a time elapses, before a true and satisfactory formulary is discovered, the prime necessity is for the union of the soul with Christ to be unimpaired. If that is maintained, He, by His Spirit, will lead into all the truth. Chief amongst other discoveries will be that of the Bible as the Word of God. The Christian believer who holds fellowship with Christ will certainly and inevitably be led to the Book which was so much to Him. He will feed on the Old Testament Scriptures as the Master fed on them. They will be bread and honey to his taste. And, in the New Testament, he will find a close and

intimate congruity with all his personal findings. He will be conscious that the same voice speaks there as in his heart. He will become convinced that the Word and the words have emanated from the same source. The Bible will become his armoury, his tool-closet, his treasure-house, and his observatory ; the holy and Divinely inspired gift of the Spirit of Truth.

IV

THE JEWELLED GATE (*Continued*)

(2) LOVE

THIS is a most necessary ingredient, if the cup of life is to be of the rarest quality, administering perpetual blessedness to the soul, because it administers incessant helpfulness to others; but we must be sure that we get the genuine article, as there are many counterfeits passing in current circulation.

Anacreon begins one of his poems by saying that he can only sing of love; but on his lips the word had a connotation which was altogether different from that with which it has been invested since the beginning of this era. In fact, Christianity had to perform for this word and others the same office that missionaries have frequently to perform in the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of African tribes, selecting words for their purpose, which have had other and lower significance, cleansing and reminting them. Before Christianity came, *love* had meant largely the fire of self-indulgence, henceforth it was to stand for the pure flame of an unquenchable self-giving.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, to use the ordinary term, though it is really a prose-poem of love, the Master clearly foreshadowed this change. From the old days of Moses, love had been in constant usage as a necessary part of the equipment of the religious soul; but it had remained unillumined, as the red sandstone peaks of Sinai's desert before sunrise. Christ unfolded the true significance of the word. He cleft the rock, and it flowed with living water. In love, as He understood it, there was an absolute breaking down of old prejudices and reservations. It overleapt the alienation of race, for the Samaritan was despised and abhorred by the Jew, as a mongrel; and, on his part, he was not stinting in reciprocal hatred. It defied the narrow definitions of creed, on which the orthodox prided themselves, for this rare plant grew on a foreign soil, where it was least expected, whilst in those who stood forth as the acknowledged exponents of orthodoxy, it was scandalously absent. It differed, by a whole heaven, from the sentiment of pity, which the ancients were prepared to extol, because the stranger risked a further murdersome attack by the robber gang, which might have cost his life-blood, and freely expended time, thought, care and money on the wounded stranger, too

far gone even to appeal to him for help, but lying there helpless in his blood. A sentiment which was irrespective of race, of religion, and of the soft appeal to complacency or pity, was the ideal which Christ propounded that day to the astonished crowd as His conception of Love!

More than this, as we shall see, He filled in the outlines of His conception with the living colours of His own career. Indeed, when the great Apostle, who probably, after Christ, is the greatest Christian, painted in immortal colours his conception of Christian love, it was the Master Himself who sat for the portrait. Each line of 1 Cor. xiii. was true of Him,and even then the half was not told. One has often tried to imagine the amazement with which St. Paul's amanuensis must have looked up from his paper, when transcribing from the Apostle's lips these burning words. They had been wading together through intricate problems of Church discipline and order ; the babble of discordant voices had been filling the air ; strong and clear-cut analyses, founded on subtle intellectual and spiritual distinctions, had been enunciated and recorded ; there had been no continuous flow of thought or speech. The Apostle had laboriously picked his difficult way through his argument. But suddenly all

this was altered and from his lips there poured forth this stream of liquid gold. To us, looking back on it over the level tract of the centuries, it seems like a gleam of sunshine breaking from a stormy sky on a verdureless and tempest-riven range.

But the Apostle was himself an embodiment of the Love that he described so eloquently. He was a debtor to all men for love's sake. It might be the judge on the tribunal on whose verdict his own fate, humanly speaking, depended, or a poor demon-haunted girl on the street—for him love levelled all distinctions, and offered its stores with the same lavish generosity. To many he seemed beside himself. Felix, in a rare tribute, exclaimed : "Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning has made thee mad ! " But whether he was beside himself, it was to God ; or sober, it was for the cause he loved. The love of Christ constrained him, as a boiling torrent is constrained within the narrow, rocky banks on either side, When he spoke in this way, he did not surely intend his natural love to Christ, but the love of Christ, in its pure and eternal essence, which had inundated his soul. He thus judged, that since the One had died for all, those who appreciated His supreme self-giving should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him, who had

laid them under such infinite obligations. There was no taint of exaggeration, when he confessed that whatever things he might have counted gain—and there were not a few on which he might have justly prided himself—these he accounted loss in comparison with the excellency of Christ, for whom he would have been willing to sacrifice ten thousand lives.

This selfless devotion for others has been characteristic of the followers of Christ and His Apostles. It is the one dominant note of the Christian religion. Too often Christianity has been dwarfed into a system of morals on the one hand, or of the escape from justly-incurred penalty on the other; its professors have built its shining materials on the rubble and sand of selfishness. What wonder that they have done irreparable damage to the progress of the Gospel, the essential chord of whose music was struck by the Master, when He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, when ye have love."

All through the centuries there have been great lovers of men. Some have been known as *saints*, but there have been multitudes who were never canonized or even recognised. In many obscure and humble breasts this flame has burnt, which the Divine Prometheus

brought from Heaven in the reed of His humanity.

In his "History of Port Royal," Sainte-Beuve says: "Penetrate a little beneath the diversity of circumstances, and it becomes evident that in Christians of different epochs there is a single fundamental and identical spirit of piety and love; an inner state, which, before all things, is one of love, humility, of an infinite confidence in God, and of severity for one's self, accompanied with tenderness for others. The fruits, peculiar to this condition of soul, have the same savour in all, under distant suns, and in different surroundings, in St. Teresa of Avila, just as in any Moravian brother at Herrnhut."

Let us take two widely different examples. St. Francis of Assisi was a great lover of men. In few has the flame of Divine love burnt more clearly and hotly than in him. The brilliant cavalier renounced his property, and stepped down from his social position and prestige. He went poorly clad in an old tunic, which a friend of other days in pity gave him. He took up his abode among the poorest, and made lepers his special charge. On these he expended the most touching care, washing and wiping their sores, and all the more gentle and radiant, as their sores were more repulsive. The Bishop

of Assisi said : " Your way of living without owning anything seems to me very harsh and difficult." " My lord," he replied, " if we possessed property, we should have need of arms for its defence, for it is the source of quarrels, of lawsuits, and the love of God and one's neighbour usually finds many obstacles therein, this is why we do not desire temporal goods."

It was this consuming love for his fellows that attracted to him men of all ranks. In the eyes of haughty nobles and jaded votaries of pleasure, a new light had arisen on life, before which the tremulous starlight of this world paled ; and they forsook all else to learn the secret. Once more those who sought for the pearls of life, vainly shuffling the heaps of common stones that lay on the pearl-fishers' trays, realised that in the ranks of the mendicants it was possible to find a Pearl of such great price as to repay them for the sacrifice of all else to obtain it. And, when the exchange was made, there on the shores of the infinite Southern Ocean of Love, they accounted themselves enriched for ever.

Or, crossing the gulf of centuries, we recall those touching words, which the virulent calumnies of her enemies extorted from Mrs. Butler, that true heroine and saint : " I have

but one little spare room in my house. Into that little room I have received, with my husband's joyful consent, one after another of these fallen sisters. We have given them in the hour of trouble, sickness, and death the best that our house could afford. In that little room I have nursed poor outcasts and have loved them as if they had been my own sisters. Many have died in my arms. Not far from us there is a cemetery, in a sunny corner of which stands a row of humble graves, beneath which lie the earthly remains of these our children, now resting on the bosom of their Saviour. Every one of these departed in good hope and joyfully, having found—besides the deeper peace—the treasure of a pure friendship before they died. I have sought out not only women, but the most miserable of men, poor sailors—Norwegians, Spaniards, Greeks—and have laboured to convey to them, in any language possible, the sense of a higher manhood. I am ashamed to be obliged to state facts I would far rather conceal, seeing we have only done our duty for the poor and sinful."

One remarkable characteristic of this self-giving is the willingness to forgo *rights*. It is as though one common law ruled in lives dedicated to the cause of humanity—*No living being has the right to all his rights, so long as the*

interests of others may be better served by their surrender. Christ would have been within His rights, if on His rejection at Nazareth He had withdrawn to where He was before, or from the slopes of the Lebanon had stepped across the open door of Paradise. He would have been within His rights had He spoken the word which had released the twelve legions of angels from their enforced restraint. Paul would have been within his rights if he had received the freely offered subsidies and maintenance of the infant churches which he had called into existence. Francis might have spent quiet years on the slopes of the Apennines, and Mrs. Butler might have enjoyed the opulence and respect accorded to the wife of a dignitary of the Anglican Church. But the summons of human misery and need was irresistible, and rights, as well as luxuries and pleasures, were freely surrendered at the call.

In his " Enoch Arden," Tennyson has immortalised this trait. The returned husband and father would have been perfectly within his rights had he stepped out of the obscurity of the little garden, and revealed his person and identity. Phillip's wife was his, and his the sweet dower of children, except the babe of that fatal but innocent second wedlock. But he quietly withdrew and went back to the

poor hostel, where, with no attendant but the garrulous housewife, he turned his face towards the wall, and died. Truly, the poet, however, says of him :

> " He was not all unhappy. His resolve
> Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
> Prayer from a living source within the will,
> And beating up through all the bitter world,
> Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
> Kept him a living soul."

The underlying conception of Christian love is that of Trusteeship. A man, suddenly stricken with death, calls in the friend of his youth and manhood, and says : " The end is near ; I had thought to live longer and make further provision for wife and child, but it is not to be. This is the amount of my property, and there are my investments. I wish to appoint you as my trustee. Do not fail me in this hour. Deal with mine as you wish your own to be dealt by. Make the best of what I have gathered, and see to those I leave." Can a man resist an appeal like that ? Must not all other considerations be submerged before this last appeal ? And when presently he comes into possession of all, can he use one fraction of it for himself ? No, assuredly, he will act to his own detriment rather than lay his hands

on the smallest item of his friend's bequest. Even his legitimate personal expenses will probably be absent, when he hands in the account of his stewardship. No effort will have been spared to increase the income for his wards, whatever the cost of time and thought for himself.

This is the clue to Christ's own life in this world. He recognised that whatever He held, He held in the interests of mankind, and that He was not at liberty to abstract the smallest fraction for Himself. This was the first point that He established on the Mount of Temptation. He had already been declared to be the Son of God with power by that Voice which had spoken from heaven at His baptism, and proclaimed Him the beloved Son. Then the temptation arose, quite naturally, from the physical side of His nature, and when hard pressed with the hunger of His long fast, "Why not use this power to turn these stones to bread." It was specious enough. There was no harm in wanting or eating bread. The Heavenly Father, in accepting His self-emptying, would surely not begrudge His self-sustenance in the conditions of His mortal career. But it could not be. Human need was too dire and clamant for Him to think of deducting

even this ounce-weight of power from the deposit at His disposal on man's behalf, though that deposit were infinite and divine.

And He was consistent with this resolve in all the subsequent incidents of His ministry. When ten thousand hungry people gathered around His table, spread in the lonely hills, He fed them with fish and bread, so that each was filled, and there was a large surplusage left over ; but in the early morning He searched a fig tree for His breakfast, which apparently He had no other means of procuring. How could it be otherwise, whilst Judas held the bag !

He left the mountain at the dawn, tearing Himself from fellowship with His Father, and traversed the stormy waves, overpowering the laws of Nature for the purpose of calming the fears of His distressed and affrighted followers ; but when challenged to cast Himself down the steeps of air, He refused, because, whilst generous to extravagance for others, He was, so to speak, parsimonious for Himself.

He was keen to take to Paradise a penitent malefactor, with a spoilt record and misspent life behind him ; but he would not go there for even a brief breathing space,

though the doors stood wide open through which Moses and Elijah had come.

On the occasion of His arrest He had no hesitation in stretching out His hand to heal a wounded ear, but would not use aught of His power to help Himself, and meekly asked the ruffian soldiers who were tightly binding His hands, to permit Him to extend one of them far enough to touch the wound. "Suffer ye thus far, and He touched the ear and healed it."

So eager was His devotion to men that, if we may put it so, He took no percentage, however small, of the unsearchable riches which He brought to their help. Though He knew that His body must be raised again, for the great purposes of redemption, He took no kind of thought for its preservation and interment. His all-absorbing interest was for others. He saved others, but He would not save Himself, and He could not do both. He literally renounced everything that others might have everything; and it is because of the immense wealth which, through His absolute self-surrender He has been able to distribute, that He has stood forth among all lovers of our race as easily Prince and Chief. He lost Himself; but, in His own words, *He found His life.* There-

fore He is most blessed for ever, and anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows.

The life which reproduces the Love of which we are speaking is the truly happy one. Compared with it, the joys of the giddy round of amusements, patronised by the jaded crowds of fashion, are as the flash of the meteor across the arch of night as compared with the steady shining of the sun. Go through the world, discovering and advertising the best in others, wiping tears from off all faces, pouring the oil of sympathy into the open wounds of belaboured and plundered travellers, ministering to suffering, soothing alarm, heartening the fearful; bearing, believing, and hoping all things; and never failing any in the hour when they turn for sympathy and help in their distress, and you will drink of the most exquisite joys that are known by mortals. This is the elixir of life. Beneath its spell our eyes are opened to behold the primal beauty of creation. Like the beloved Apostle, you will see jewels underpinning the City of God, hear voices sweeter than the chime of the waves on the beach, and find doors opening into Heaven, giving glimpses of the sapphire Throne. "It is more blessed to give," said the Master, "than to receive."

"Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall man give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

* * * * *

It may seem that an impossible ideal has been set up, to which only those who are exceptionally gifted can aspire. But though the upper summits, where the edelweiss and gentian grow, may seem inaccessible, the lower slopes may be trodden, where the hamlets nestle in the dimples of the hills and the scent of the hayfield bespeaks the near presence of the home of man. Let us begin with these. It may be that we shall be allured from level to level, until, almost unconsciously, we attain to the upper steps in the giant staircase of aspiration and ascent.

One of the main points that we must make with ourselves, if we would attain to a rightly-ordered and pure love, is to forgo those proclivities and affinities which endeavour to monopolise us. It is not difficult to like people who are naturally attractive and charming; but there is no special virtue in this, and we cannot preen ourselves and congratulate ourselves as having a

specially loving and lovable disposition if we confine ourselves to these. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect." It was a Master in the art of love who spoke thus!

A perfect love is that which is irrespective of congenial and attractive personalities, which is elicited by the appeal of need, whether issuing from peasant or prince, enemy or friend, and which is not content with bearing with untoward and awkward people, but goes out of its way to redeem them from their untowardnesses and awkwardnesses, their spurs and angles. We are summoned, if we would love with a divine love, to give ourselves for those we do not like, and minister to those who naturally repel us.

We are bidden to love those who hate us, to do them good, to be kind to the unthankful and evil, to be like our Heavenly Father, whose sunshine falls on the evil and the good, and His rain on the just and the unjust. The life that is always giving, always

pouring forth its stores, always forgiving, forbearing, and uplifting—such is the life to which we are called, if we would make the most and best of these few years of sojourn in a world of unutterable need.

It seems as though, in the Divine apportionment of our lot, people are put into our lives, who reveal us to ourselves and show how far short we have come of the Divine ideal that we have been studying; they are about the last persons whom we would naturally have chosen. Their temperaments, interests, and views are at right angles to our own. They are like those bare and naked poles, characteristic of Kent, up which the hop plant climbs to spread its waving arms in the glorious sunlight. But their presence in our homes and family circles is intended to rebuke our pretensions to love, and teach us how to set about acquiring it in good earnest.

Probably, under such circumstances, the true way to act is to reverse the order of procedure as stated in the Gospels. We are there bidden to love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Now, this may be the Divine order, but it is not the order which is easiest to follow. It is impossible to command the *heart:* it is too wayward, and too wilful.

It is only slightly less difficult to command the *soul,* because we have been accustomed to leave it to its vagrant and wayward choices. The *mind,* if it stands for the thinking faculty, unless we have trained ourselves to habits of concentration, is not wont to obey control. If, therefore, by any of these faculties we are to *begin* to love the unlovely, we may be greatly puzzled and set back. But we may find refuge in the word "*strength.*" Here, at least, is a department of our nature, where the will can operate. And if we begin by loving people with our *strength,* doing things for them by the stern compulsion of our will, we shall find ourselves passing through the other phases, and loving with the mind, the soul, and the heart.

I knew an incident of this kind. A poor governess, cramped with rheumatism, came into the home of relatives—a newly-married man and wife—as her only port in the storm, unless the workhouse. The husband fought hard with himself for long months, affecting to ignore her presence in the attic bedroom. Finally, however, his better nature triumphed, and he resolved that since he could love her by no other part of his nature, he would, at least, do so with his *strength.* He, therefore, offered to carry her down in his strong arms to share the midday meal with the family, and

carried her back. The fact of making this effort for her comfort awakened new chords of sympathy. He began to think more kindly of her, of her need and loneliness—it was the love of his *mind*. Next, he offered to read poetry to her, and discovered that their ideals were similar, and he loved her with his *soul*. And when she died soon after, and his wife and he stood beside the open grave, they discovered that they had come to love her with the *heart*. What had begun as hard duty resulted in pure affection.

* * * * * *

Do these seem to be counsels of perfection ? Say not so. Remember that Divine Love is the atmosphere of the eternal world in which our spirits rear themselves, or bathe as the mountains bathe their feet in blue Lucerne. It is not possible to do these things that we have been indicating with out poor fickle resources, but we can place our five barley loaves and two small fish in the hands of the Almighty Christ. We can yield ourselves to Him as the vehicles through which He can shed abroad His love in the world. There is a quality in His love which is not negative only, but positive. which combines the vigour and energy of the man with the tenderness of woman, and the

sweetness of the little child. It is not what you can be, but what He can be in you ; not what you can do, but what He can do by you ; not what you feel, but what His emotions, rising up in you, amount to. You are hopelessly bankrupt, but you are rich. In the earthen vessel of your heart, you carry much heavenly treasure, that the exceeding greatness of your love may be of God, and not of you!

Long years ago, I remember two ladies coming to me—sisters—whose mother had recently died, and a dispute had arisen between them and their father about her property. So far as I remember, he was monopolising what had been left in part to them. In consequence, a breach had occurred, which had separated them, though circumstances compelled them to live together in a lone part of the country. These sisters had passed through an experience of Divine illumination granted to few, but they dreaded to return home, because of the inevitable ice-barrier which had grown up between them and their only surviving parent. They sought help, and there was only one thing to say : " You must love him, and to do so you must begin at once to express your love. On arrival at home, go straight to his room, and without a word of reference to the past, salute him with a daughter's kiss." They said that

it was impossible. My reply was : " Offer your lips to the love of God, and let *it* flow through them." I heard after from them, that the effect was magical. The father broke down, and asked their forgiveness. It was as when one day of early summer changes the whole aspect of Nature.

" If," says Rev. Robert Law,* " we have the Love that is not merely liking for the likeable, admiration for the admirable, gratitude to the generous—Love whose will to bless men is undeterred by demerit or unattractiveness, that bears another's burden, dries another's tears, forgives injuries, overcomes evil with good—Love which is prompt to help those who need our help (hoping for nothing again), instead of those who need it not (hoping for much in return)—then the Love that manifests itself in us is that Divine *kind* of love which is most worthy of the name. It is God Himself within us, acting out His Life in ours. It is His Love that is fulfilled in us." It is this that enables the Apostle to use the word *ought:* " We *ought* to love one another." It would be inadmissible to use the *ought* of necessary duty, unless we were able to draw from the nature of God love for love, as grace for grace.

* " The Tests of Life." T. and T. Clark.

There is nothing for which this world of ours is more thirsty than for Love like this. All the legislation of Parliaments and the edicts of rulers are never going to change the face of Society. You may thrust down one set of rulers and establish another in their place; you may alter the tenure of land, and insist on the distribution of wealth. But the great stone face cut into the rock is not materially altered by your prescriptions. The heart of man is too subtle for you. The new rulers will be as stony-hearted as the old. A godless democracy will not be more easy to cope with than a godless aristocracy. You may pound ice with a pestle and mortar, but it is still ice; the warm sunshine is necessary to melt the ice-crystals to the common element of water. Not that legislation and political movements are to be tabooed, because they register the high-water marks of Christian civilisation; but that they cannot be trusted to bring about that new heaven and earth for which the whole creation waits.

One of the first conditions of this new universe is in the drawing together of the Church of Christ; and here one cannot forbear quoting the substance of a notable article which appeared lately in the public Press, which shows how the spirit of love may mani-

fest itself among men of differing religious views:—*

The greatest difficulty which has hitherto confronted the missionary in Eastern Africa is the riven and divided state of Christendom. Mohammedanism presents to heathenism a united front, whilst Christianity is broken into factions. Behind Islam is the driving force of an intense realisation of one fact: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet"; the power behind Christianity seems often to be only the desire of one faction to supplant another. The faith of the Moslem becomes forged into steel on the anvil of fanaticism; that of the Christian becomes soft as lead in the cooling winds of controversy. The amazing thing which indeed proves the inexhaustible vitality of Christianity is that it still sweeps masses of heathen into its fold. If it were united against heathenism and Islam, its day of final victory would speedily dawn.

Until lately, Christianity in East Africa has had neither a common policy nor a common Gospel. But in this, that part of the mission field is not remarkable. More or less, it is the same everywhere, and instead of the unity of love there are the rivalry and collision

* *The Scotsman*, August 9th, 1913.

of many sects. But three years ago, in East Africa, a scheme was projected by Dr. Henry Scott, of the Church of Scotland Mission, whose death British East Africa still mourns, which, under the wise superintendence of Bishop Willis, of Uganda, has lately resulted in the federation of all the various missions on the field.

The basis of this federation, which now unites Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others, is a common acceptance of certain basic facts and truths of the Gospel; a recognition of a common membership between the churches of the Federation; a regular administration of the two sacraments by outward signs; and a common form of Church organisation which is a blend of Episcopacy and Presbyterianism. Each society is autonomous within its own sphere, but the organisation of the future native Church is to be developed along these lines. The federated missions are to respect each other's spheres, to observe a common Church discipline, to have a prescribed course of study for the native ministry, and each minister shall be set apart by lawful authority and by the laying on of hands. "All recognised as ministers in their own churches shall be welcomed as visitors to preach in other federated churches."

"On the evening of that day, June 27th, on which the conference passed this scheme of federation, a service of Holy Communion was held in the Scottish Church at Kikuyu. Bishop Peel administered the Sacrament ; a minister of the Church of Scotland preached the sermon, and all the mission delegates received the Holy Communion from the Bishop's hands. There was no question of any difference between them. All the things that ever separated Christians were submerged by the rising tide of love and unity which had upborne them to that hour. It was a day of which the impulse will be felt throughout every mission field in the world. The missionaries of British East Africa and Uganda have given the Christian world an object-lesson in the spirit of unity. They have shown how it is possible for Christians to be 'one that the world may believe.'"

If this is possible at Uganda, it is possible anywhere and everywhere. Let us together ask the Father, who is Himself Love, that He would shed abroad His love through the hearts of His children, that we may love in the concentric circles of our life—our home, our social and business relations, and our churches—that the coming of that day may be hastened when Love will be enthroned in all hearts, kingdoms,

and countries, and the age of gold will come again to earth.

"What is the beginning?—Love.
What the course?—Love still.
What the goal?
The goal is Love on happy hill.
Is there nothing, then, but Love?
Search or sky or earth,
There is nothing, out of Love,
Hath perpetual worth.
All things flag, but only Love;
All things fail or flee;
There is nothing left but Love,
Worthy you or me?"

V

THE JEWELLED GATE (*Continued*).

(3) HOPE

FAITH and Love were brother and sister; and it is said that, dwelling in a newly opened country, they sallied forth each morning to clear the forest-lands, felling the big trees, extracting their roots, and preparing the ground for the plough; but the work was arduous and slow. Sometimes, under the sweltering midday sun, their hearts would faint. Progress seemed so tedious, the tangled undergrowth so thick. At times they were on the point of abandoning their toils and retiring from an endeavour which threatened to master them. At such times their younger sister, Hope, lyre in hand, would come, and, sitting beside them, sing of the great glory for which they were preparing. She peopled those territories with mighty cities and flourishing towns, occupied with the activities and domesticities of men. Factories and homes filled her vision. The laughter of happy children, and the chime of church bells. Her favourite theme was attuned to that ancient chord,

struck from the Harp of Prophecy by the finger of the God of Hope: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing."

Those of us who are continually immersed in the great currents and tides of human life need to refresh ourselves by looking away to these immortal frescoes on the walls of the corridors of Hope's dwelling-place. We must project ourselves into that great future, and encourage ourselves with that blessed Hope, when the present state of things will be ended, when the problem of evil will be solved, and the divine travail satisfied.

But what is true for the race is true of the individual. We may speak in the same terms of the microcosm of our personal existence as of the macrocosm of humanity. We need not, therefore, hesitate to say with the poet:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
While the swift seasons roll.
Leave thy low-vaulted past.
Let each new mansion, nobler than the last,
Shut out from heaven with dome more vast;
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

The Jewelled Gate

In the development of our life there are four stages. First, the putting forth of physical strength ; then, the awakening to the appeal of sensuous emotion ; then, the growing splendour of the intellect ; and finally, the reign of the spiritual faculty, by which the whole being is dominated from above. The precise order in which these four planes are reached may vary in different individuals ; but that there are these four, and that they succeed each other, as strata, in this order, will be generally acknowledged.

Similarly with mankind. The earliest monarchies were founded on physical force. Great empires, compared by Daniel to wild beasts, fought for the mastery of the world, came up out of the waters of the teeming ocean of life, trampled for a little while the sands, and passed from view. Next came the rule of fleshly appetite, and the mighty religious systems of paganism pampered sensual desire. Some of these survive today, such as Hinduism. Of others, we have traces among the recently exhumed relics of great nations that have long since passed away ; and what we know is confirmed by the allusions of the more ancient records of Scripture, which describe the lands of the Orient as spueing out their inhabitants be-

cause of the vileness of their abominable sensuality.

Then came the rule of the Intellect. Greece, with her wisdom, captivated and led the world. To Athens all eyes were turned ; to the voice of her great teachers all men listened. And even after the incursions of barbarians had threatened to extinguish her illuminating genius, it was in the Renaissance of Greek learning that Europe and civilisation were quickened from the torpor of the Middle Ages.

That reign is not yet finished, as the modern investigations and discoveries of science suggest ; but already another empire is beginning to manifest itself, as when the light of a summer morning steals in on a brilliantly lighted banqueting-hall. The veil of the spirit-world thins every hour. The light behind is becoming more intense. It cannot be long before the full result of Christ's passage as man into the spiritual world will bring about the spiritualising of mankind.

The law for the individual and the race is therefore ever Forward. We must leave behind our childish things, our mistakes, our failures, our sins. To look back on them will be to court petrifaction, as when Lot's wife looked back on Sodom. The beacon-

cloud only once removed to the rear of the host, to intercept the attack of the foe. Its position was invariably at the head of the march. Leave the dead past to bury its dead. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." And so it is written: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

The old legend tells that as Eve was leaving Eden she plucked a flower to carry with her as a memorial of its untainted beauty; but it withered as she passed the gate. Yet surely those other flowers which were cultured by her husband's care were more beautiful in her eyes! And was not the face of her first-born more bewitching than any flower culled from the soil of Paradise? Always dare to believe that better things are awaiting you and your race than eye has seen or heart conceived. The earth, like an ocean-going steamer, is being steered by a Divine hand to a port which may well be called "The Fair Havens." It is impossible that the great drama of human history

can end in disappointment and defeat. The Love of God has expended too much on us to abandon the work to which He has put His hand. He cannot allow His deep investment of tears and blood to be wasted. Out of the chaos of the old world the brooding Spirit brought order and beauty, till, as He viewed His handiwork, the Almighty pronounced that it was very good. Less than that cannot be expected, either in the new creation of the soul or the coming revelation of the new Heavens and Earth. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. It keeps our soul from drifting with the swing of the tide, because it enters within the veil. It cannot be ashamed because God's love is shed abroad in our hearts.

Mr. Simpson, of Edinburgh, used to tell the story of an Irish cabin in which a cripple child lay on a mattress with no light except that which came through the open doorway. Her companions were pigs and fowls; her father a drunkard. A friendly neighbour asked the father if he did not think that it would be a great improvement to strike out a window, that the child might look out as it lay. The window was made, but it only looked out on a cabbage garden. The

neighbour came in to see if the work were done, and exclaimed in amazement at the window not having been placed on the other side of the house, where she could see the moving glory of the outspread sea. This also was done. But on yet another day the woman returned, because her heart yearned for the poor little child, and protested that the work would never be complete until, over the child's bed, the father had made a window in the roof, so that she might see the arch of the sky, and at night the moon and stars. This also was done. It is not enough to have the window of Patience for our cabbage gardens, or Experience for our seas; we need an outlook on those abiding realities which already are in the purpose of God and shall be one day realised for evermore in the actual experience of mankind.

"Hast thou hope?" they asked of John Knox when he was dying. He spoke nothing, but raised his finger, and pointed upward, and so died.

Hope thou in God, for thou shalt yet praise Him. All that we have ever hoped for will one day become ours, not in the coarser forms in which we have conceived, but in fair and ethereal shapes. Our hopes speak with prophetic voices of the good time

coming, and they shall not be found liars. We shall possess our possessions. We shall inherit the land. We shall be satisfied. Not along the way that we expected, nor in the precise form we anticipated, but as God hath planned. The outward may perish, but the inward will root itself and grow. The things that are capable of being shaken will remove, but those which cannot be shaken will be imperishably ours.

"No star is ever lost we once have seen;
We always may be what we might have been.
Since Good, though only thought, has life and breath,
God's life—can always be redeemed from death;
And evil, in its nature, is decay,
And any hour can blot it all away;
The hopes that lost in some far-distance seem,
May be the truer life, and this the dream."

—A. A. Procter.

We cannot do better, as we close these paragraphs on Hope, than recall those true words of a great preacher,* which sum up precisely what we have been endeavouring to say: "Progress is the law of the world; it is the law which ought to rule our lives. See that you have an active part in the great evolution of the race. What matters, after all, the catastrophes, the convulsions of

* Rev. Stopford Brooke.

heart and intellect which you must suffer, the shattered sail, the midnight watch in the hurricane, the loneliness of mid-ocean? It is life at least; it is more, it is moving with the movement of the world, and the world is moving under the direction of Christ."

Yes, Christ is with us. We are all to come in the power of the Holy Spirit to perfect manhood, to the measure of the standard of the fullness of Christ. A thousand years with Him is as a watch in the night. To us the pace is slow, but it is not really so. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Be of good cheer, for there shall be a fulfilment unto you of all things spoken by the Lord!

VI

SOME EXPERIENCES ON THE WAY

THE way often lies for miles over the dull and irksome flats of *the commonplace.* Each dawn summons us to the same uninteresting and uninviting tasks. "The common round and daily task" are easier to sing about than practise. We feel that it is perfectly legitimate to complain of the dull, slow life we are forced to lead, the lowliness of our position, the drudgery of our toil. Surely we were made for something better than to drive the pen over reams of paper, to type out business accounts, to wait behind a counter, or travel for wares in which we have no interest. What shall we have to show for these years of obscure commonplace! If it were not for the necessity of getting bread for ourselves and the young or aged lives that depend on us, how gladly would we renounce our homely toils, and seek some way of living more congenial and romantic, which would gain the notice of the great world, and enable us to feel at the last that we had not lived in vain. Life becomes very bitter when we allow thoughts like these to corrode

it. The gnawing of the worm of remorse is only more to be feared!

Of course, the ultimate remedy for the corrosion of discontent is to get down to the bottom fact of the will of God. Every morning and evening we pray, "Thy will be done"; but of what use is it to utter this petition, unless we are content to have that will done in us? The one secret of life and peace and growth is not to devise and plan for ourselves, but to accept loyally that position which is assigned to us by Divine Providence, to fall in with the order of Society, to be prepared to be a cogwheel so long as we are included in the great movement of the age. If the stand on which the Master of the House has placed you is a very lowly or common one, or if the room you are called to illuminate is only a cold, dark cellar, still, be content to shine your brightest, and do not repine against His decision.

Perhaps these lowly duties are the highest of which you are really capable; or perhaps they are given as the supreme test of your character; and if, like Joseph, you will be thoughtful and attentive to the poor prisoners in the gaol, you may be promoted to a high place presently, where the qualities which have been approved in the restricted sphere

of the commonplace will be needed to direct the affairs of the nation. What vast numbers have never had the chance to do really big things, because they have not set themselves carefully and earnestly to do little ones. They have not been promoted to rule their ten cities because in discontented pettishness they have buried their one talent in the ground. "He who neglects a thing which he suspects he ought to do, because it seems to him too small a thing, is deceiving himself; it is not too little, but too great for him, that he doeth it not." In point of fact, by their refusal to do little things well men are perpetually revealing their littleness. The really great will do little things greatly, and in doing them thus they show themselves of the highest quality possible. The perfect man will do common things perfectly.

Have you not noticed how the greatest artists choose the commonest incidents of life and glorify them? Take, for instance, Millet's "Angelus." What is there in that familiar picture but a potato-patch, a couple of simple peasants in the attitude of prayer, and a church steeple on the skyline in the distance! They are the most ordinary objects that he could have selected; but out of them the great artist has constructed a conception which has furnished

a moving and uplifting inspiration to tens of thousands. The fact that Wellington slept on a camp-bed, or that Nelson used such and such a common article of toilet; that Wilberforce made his vow under this tree, or that William Carey chalked his name and cobbler's trade on that board of wood, has apprised these ordinary things at a value altogether disproportionate to their actual worth. Why should the commonplace drag you down? Why should not you lift it up, so that people may even desire to be occupied in that very sphere because you once filled it? This is turning the valley of Baca into a place of water-springs.

It demands a much larger amount of virtue to do an obscure duty nobly than one that glistens in the eye of the public. Perhaps it is not so difficult to die a martyr's death, when you know that you are lighting a fire that will never be put out; but to die by inches, to starve in the absence of human love and sympathy, to plod on with no word of gratitude or recognition—this is the supreme test of character.

Besides the routine nature of our daily toil affords an opportunity for a more intensive culture of the soul. An occasional effort, on which you concentrate all your thought and

prayer, may be successful in attaining the object to which you set yourself. But it is too spasmodic, too transient, to give you an opportunity of forming permanent character. The mould is broken before the metal has cooled. The wine-skin splits and the wine is spilled. But prolonged discipline in ordinary and commonplace duty, the spirit's silence and unselfishness carried over a long track of time, the formation of a hidden habit of unassuming humility, obedience, and piety, adorn the soul with a saintly beauty which can only result from the exercise of a prolonged endurance. Nothing is common or unclean unless degraded by an ignoble soul. The lowliest insect when placed beneath the microscope has beauties which Solomon in all his glory could not excel. The desert bush is aflame with God, though we fail to see. The meanest flower that blows may awaken thoughts too deep for tears. The flower in a crannied wall may be a window into the infinite. "No day," says some one, "is commonplace if we only had eyes to see its splendour. There is no duty that comes to our hand but brings with it the possibility of kingly service." Remember that the glory of Christ's nature made the poor robes He wore shine with a glory and whiteness such as no fuller on earth could attain to.

" The common problem—yours, mine, every one's,
Is not to fancy what were fair in life,
Provided it could be—but finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means—a very different thing."

—R. Browning.

Character has been said to have the power of building an edifice out of ordinary circumstances. From the same materials, common and ordinary as bricks and mortar, one man builds palaces, and another hovels, one warehouses, and another villas. Bricks and mortar are bricks and mortar until the architect makes something else. It is a good rule for an artist to mix brains with his paint, but for a Christian it is a still better rule to work character on the canvas of the commonplace until the blended materials yield a cloth of gold.

* * * * *

Sometimes the way will dip down into the shadowed valley of *great sorrow*. The Master said that He would give us a joy which no man could take from us ; but He also said that our sorrow would be turned into joy. It is as though sorrow were the raw material out of which He makes joy. At Cana before He supplied the guests with wine, He had the water-pots filled with water. So you must not be surprised if now you have sorrow, for out

of your present affliction He is making the eternal weight of glory, and you cannot have that without this. It worketh the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There is not one tear of sorrow, humbly and resignedly shed, which is not a seed-corn cast into the desolate furrows of your life, and which shall not yield you some hundred-fold of joy when the summer has arrived.

But remember to take your sorrows from the divine permission. Even though his brethren were the obvious cause of his long suffering, Joseph refused to see their hand in it, and said: "It was not ye, God sent me hither to preserve life." If you prefer, you may make the distinction between what God permits and what He decrees. There is His decretive will that ordains, but His permission has to be sought before Satan can tempt Job, or Pilate crucify the Christ. "Thou couldst do nothing against me, except it were given thee from above." But the ultimate fact in each case is the will of God. And the way to find sorrow's yoke both easy and light is to take it from the Father's hand, saying: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." Then the yoke becomes wings to soar with, something as when we were children the tail of our kite helped the kite to face the wind

and fly. "I asked Allah for something to ride; He gave me something to carry!"

But much depends on whether we turn to the lower or the higher help when sorrow beats down on us like a pitiless storm. If we stoop to avail ourselves of human sympathy to the exclusion of the divine, or resort to the diversion of company or travel or amusement, we shall come out of our trouble, not stronger but weaker, not greater but smaller, not richer but poorer. But if we turn Godwards, and seek to be comforted with His comfort, if we declare that we have none in heaven or earth that we desire beside Him, then will a light arise to us in the darkness, and the night shall be light about us.

"Weeping," says the Psalmist, "may come in to lodge at even." (A.V., marg.) We can almost see her veiled figure creeping along under the shadows of the big trees, whilst below the torrent thunders down the glen, and she seeks lodging for the night. Let us not refuse her request, for she will repay us handsomely as she leaves our house at dawn, giving place to jocund joy. Her payment will be fortitude, patience, self-control, wisdom, sympathy and faith. Adam Bede, the great novelist tells us, did not attempt to outlive his sorrow, did not let it slip from him as a tem-

porary burden, leaving him the same man as before. " It would be a poor result of all our anguish and wrestling," she says, " if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it—if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident frame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of the unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indomitable force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy—the one poor word which includes all our best thoughts and our best love."

" Do not cheat thy heart and tell her
' Grief will pass away,
Hope for fairer times in future,
And forget to-day.'
Tell her if you will that sorrow
Need not come in vain ;
Tell her that the lesson taught her
Far outweighs the pain."

Sorrow is necessary to the soul, as a background for the rainbow of hope to repose upon. Sorrow is the furnace that burns our bonds, so that we walk free in the fires. Sorrow is the veil flung over the cage of the song-bird whilst

it learns to sing. Sorrow is the excuse for God to draw nearer to us, and for Him to draw us nearer to Himself. Sorrow is God's almoner, who brings His fairest gifts packed in rough cases. But, after all, the gift which has required most packing, and comes encased in straw, and crate, and matting, however ugly the appearance, is the most valuable and precious.

In sore trouble, let us anoint our heads and wash our faces, so that we may not seem to others to be hardly used at our Father's hands. Though your heart be sad within you, let cheery words and kindly deeds go forth to others. Meet them with a gentle welcome, considerate kindness, and helpful words. There is no cure for heartache and heartbreak so sure or speedy as becoming a son or daughter of consolation, after the manner of the good Barnabas. No trouble should be too great to make us forget to show courtesy to those around us, and especially to the poor, the timid and the oppressed. No heart-sorrow must be so engrossing as to rob us of our readiness to show kindness and sympathy. We must school ourselves to obey a code of unfaltering nobleness, whatever our inward smart ; to subject ourselves to a vigorous self-discipline lest we become self-centred in our grief. But directly

we compel ourselves to take this side against ourself, we begin to recover. The heart-forces begin to rally. The tears begin to flow more quietly. A new radiance comes into our eyes, and we ask to be called not Marah, but Naomi —*Pleasantness*. "I beg you," wrote Phillips Brooks, "whatever be your suffering, to learn first of all that God does not mean to take your sorrow off, but to put strength into you, that you may be able to carry it. Be sure your sorrow is not yielding you its best, unless it makes you a more thoughtful person than you have ever been before."

Perhaps the loftiest attitude to take up in the presence of some crushing sorrow is to dare to thank God for it. A lady of my acquaintance, on hearing from her doctor that her children were sickening for scarlet fever, before taking the necessary precautions, went direct to her room, and kneeling before God said: "I thank Thee, Father, for allowing this to come, because Thou couldst not have allowed so great a trouble, except for its vast revenue of gain to us all." And it was so, because through that illness salvation came to that house. "Whatever seeming calamity happens to you," says William Law, "if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you, therefore, work miracles, you could

not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit ; for it heals with a word spoken, and turns all that it touches into happiness." Therefore,

> " Measure thy life by loss instead of gain.
> Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured out."

* * * * * *

The way becomes so precipitous and dangerous in places that it is almost impossible to keep our feet. We lose our footing and roll down the slope, carrying with us a pother of rubble, stones, and dust. In these hours of set-back and *failure,* we are sorely daunted and ashamed, especially when we can trace our mishaps to moral and spiritual defects that might and ought to have been avoided. We are disappointed with ourselves ; we become querulous and peevish because of what we fancy has been a needlessly difficult test ; we lose heart and yield to the suggestion that it is useless to make any further attempt. At such times we lock ourselves up with our dark thoughts, and carefully exclude the soft warm breath of the summer which awaits us outside, the forgiving love and grace of God, which is never nearer to us than at such times. It often seems to me that we do more to

destroy our peace, and interrupt our happy relationship with God, by yielding to discouragement and pessimism, and doubting God's willingness to forgive and restore, than by our recent lapse into failure. Our sin is not so harmful in its effects, evil as they may be, as the refusal to believe that God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. At the first moment of real contrition and confession, they are as absolutely wiped out as though they have never been committed. They have disappeared as a wreath of cloud in the clear heavens, or as a stone dropped into miles of ocean-water.

It is a mistake to suppose that the most successful men are those who have never failed, or that do not fail. More have succeeded through failure. The man who has never failed is less able to understand and manage his fellows, is less tactful and self-controlled, is less likely to be able to avert disaster and retrieve lost causes, than those who have learnt the sources of weakness, only to guard against their recurrence, and avoid them in future. The best teachers are they who have been warned and corrected by their own mistakes. The captain who has had an accident with his steamer, and the commander who has lost a battle, but who have deeply pondered the

sharp lesson, and obtained the honey out of the carcass of the lion, are more careful and prudent than untempered success, which may become foolhardy, could make them. Do not dwell on your faults. Notice carefully how they occurred. Analyse their inception, progress, and maturity. Learn your lesson so carefully that you may not make the same mistake again. Then forget the things that are behind, your past successes and your past failures, and " press forward to the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus." Listen to Carlyle's advice on this point. He says : " Never let mistakes or wrong directions, of which every man falls into many, discourage you. There is precious instruction to be got by finding we were wrong. Let a man try faithfully, manfully, to be right ; he will grow daily more and more right."

The idea that prevails with so many is to get away from their past, and begin all over again. It is natural enough ; and there is a sense in which we awake each new morning to live in the freshness of new resolve ; but let us never forget that the noblest men are they who make their mistakes and failures stepping-stones to a more conspicuous success, and, baffled, have learned to fight better.

Life and the Way Through

"Deem not the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain."
—LONGFELLOW.

There is a great difference between falling with the face towards or falling with the face averted from the ideal; or, to put it bluntly, between falling *up* and falling *down*. There are some who, when they have lost their footing, resign themselves to the force of moral gravitation, and continually descend with an ever-increasing velocity. They despair of themselves, despair of forgiveness, despair of God. For them the one fall has so broken their self-complacency that they cannot face a repetition, and will not believe that pure virtue is unattainable in man's native strength. Others there are, cast in a happier mould, who, whilst falling, keep their eyes fixed on the glistening purity above them, and have no sooner touched the ground than they spring to their feet again, and begin to climb anew. They refuse to have the great matter settled by one untoward accident. One point may be lost, but the game is not finished. Paganini once, in the face of an expectant audience, broke every string of his violin but one, and cried: "One string and Paganini!" Yes, one

last string and God, will yet make music out of an almost wrecked life!

There are other setbacks, which arise not so much from moral defect or obliquity, but from *errors of judgment.* We see how such and such a step led to a dissipation of energy, a waste of time, injury to ourselves and others, misunderstandings, heart-burning, and the beclouding of a fair dawn. "If only we had that chance in our hand again," we exclaim, "how differently we would act." This confession is very tormenting. What a labyrinth of conjectures we enter upon, when we try to piece out for ourselves the happenings which might have taken place, if only we had decided and acted differently! We always seem to suppose that any course would have been better than the one we adopted, and that any other path would have brought us out on the main road. But this is by no means certain. As likely as not, it would have landed us in a similar or worse quagmire. This incessant worry over the past is as weakening and disabling as it is absolutely useless and vain. You are not only helpless to undo what is done, but you sap the energy with which you should face the situation which has been created and requires strong handling. You dis-

courage others by your expressions of regret. That rude soldier, Joab, spoke admirable good sense to David when he gave way to excessive weeping over his miscreant son. "The victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people, for the people heard say how the King was grieved for his son, and the people gat them by stealth into the city, as people that are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle." And the commander-in-chief of the army, which had saved the kingdom for him, said: "Arise and go forth and speak comfortably to thy servants, for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry a man with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that hath befallen thee from thy youth until now."

On the whole, in this case also, it is wise to forget the things that are behind. It is a good maxim that if you have acted according to the best light you had at the time, what you decided on was the will of God and was the best that could be done. You had not your present experience at your side then. You could not forecast how the matter would work out. You did your best, so far as you *then* knew. If you had to make your decision again under the same conditions, it would be

almost certainly identical with the one that you now deplore. Then leave it there. Don't fret or worry. You trusted in God, when you acted; dare to believe that His hand was guiding you. This was the best way through, however difficult it is. Any other way would not only have been difficult, but impassable. The difficulties you are encountering are hard to flesh and blood, but they are as much slighter than they would have been, as the waters at the neap are lower than at the flood. Let the past no longer debilitate you. Rise and meet the present. You did what you thought to be right when you turned back from the straight road to Canaan, and marched directly on the Red Sea. The mountains block your onward march, the sea lies all along upon your left hand, and now Pharaoh and his men of war are pressing on your track. You are in a wedge of perplexity and peril. Throw the responsibility of the position on God, whose will you have endeavoured to do. Stand still and see His salvation. He will make a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, for none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.

The one crucial question in all this must always be, *Am I growing?* We have had

our ups and downs, our crushing defeats, our catastrophes, our hours of heartbreak and despair. Our Jabbok-brooks, with their mysterious conflicts, have left us halting in our gait. The craft of Delilah, to whom we ought never to have submitted ourselves, has deprived us of vision and brought us to grind in the prison house. But has there been growth? After all, no man need write Ichabod on his life, if through all its various experiences he has never turned his back, but has always marched breast-forward. It is not so much a question of what we have done, but of what has accrued to our character in the doing. One battle, lost or won, seldom alone decides the fate of the campaign. Inch by inch the enemy must be driven back. Year after year the building proceeds. The grave question is, What are the net gains of life? That we have had reverses, made bad debts, been deceived and baffled, is sure; but has the King's business prospered, and will the balance-sheet at the end show a clear and satisfactory profit? "The tired wavelets" close in shore may seem no painful inch to gain; but what of that if

> "Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main!"

Whilst writing these words, and looking out on the beautiful Carse of Gowrie, clad in its verdure of living green, stretching to the broad waters of the Tay, a slight mist is stealing upwards towards this noble pile of buildings, which commands the far-spread landscape. This mist, which may blot out the hills, and even the great Lomonds in the west, reminds one of *the questionings* and *doubts* which will sometimes overspread the soul. Did not John the Baptist become enveloped in them? It was perhaps hardly to be wondered at. He was the child of the wide open spaces of Judah. His couch a sheltering cave, his canopy as often as not the starlit dome of the sky, his food the wild produce of Nature, the winds his sisters, the giant mountains his brethren. To him it was the veriest torture to be immured in the close, sunless dungeons of the Castle of Macherus, beyond the Jordan. Hardly a breath of God's fresh air ever found its way thither, and not a ray of light. For the harmony of Nature were substituted the discords of distant rioting, as when Herod gathered his captains and high estates to drunken and lascivious revelries. Why did not He, on whose face that ray had shone, and who had been saluted as Son of God, interpose for

his release? Was He unmindful, or was He impotent? In either case, He must have abdicated His throne. Was it all delusion? Had he mistaken his own longings for the semblance of that dove? Is it altogether to be wondered at that he sent messengers to Christ, saying, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" A sad descent was here from his announcement, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Had he, as porter, opened the door of the sheepfold to one who was not the Shepherd after all!

Christ was not surprised. There was no rebuke in His tone, no bitterness of reproach in His reply. He only hastened to give the agreed countersign of the Messiah. "Go, tell John what ye have seen." . . . And when the messengers had gone, He affirmed John to be the greatest of woman-born. Evidently that hour of honest doubt had not, in our Lord's estimate, lowered his dignity or sullied his claim. It was almost as if our Lord took it for granted that, under such conditions of confinement on the one hand, and delayed release on the other, John's despondent questionings could hardly be wondered at.

Perhaps He judges similarly of us all. There are many incitements to similar misgivings

in the present day. They arise, in part, from the comparative study of non-Christian religions; from the advance of exact scientific investigation, which leads us to demand similar exactitude in the evidences for religious statements; and in the general flux of opinion, occasioned by the decay of time-worn formularies and the slow process of substituting new ones. The old order is changing, and giving place to new; but the precise shape of the new is not yet determined, and men fail to distinguish between truth, which is immutably the same, and the forms in which it is capsuled.

There is no real reason to be disturbed by any one of these. As to the first, it would have been surprising if the old seekers after truth had not caught sight of the great panorama that lies open to God's eye, as the earth to heaven. There must have been scintillations and fragments of truth, or their words could not have satisfied such innumerable multitudes; and all truth comes ultimately through the Word of God. Mathematic truth is ever the same to every nation, kindred, and age that sets itself to its study. Always and everywhere the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. Every investigator must come to that con-

clusion. So when pure hearts earnestly desire to find the truth, they must come on discoveries, which remind us of the Beatitudes. But outside of Christianity these scattered chippings and splinters of truth are combined into no system, set forth in no symmetrical human character, and made practicable by no sufficient dynamic. And in these three respects Christianity has nothing to fear from their rivalry. It is the one full-orbed and sufficient revelation of God to man!

Or, to take the second, is there any need to be anxious because Christianity cannot be stated in a series of clear-cut formulæ, or proved by such evidences as can be adduced by the astronomer or the chemist? It is "spirit and life," as the Master said. You cannot define Love: you cannot give a mathematical proof of Love; you cannot argue on the invariable method of Love. Even the scientific man lays aside his subtle analysis and demonstration when he comes home to wife and children!

Of course Religion has its evidences, just as Love has, but they are not such as can be subjected to the reactions of chemistry or the investigations of the anatomist.

Or take the third source of trouble to many

—the exchange of the formularies of our early religion for the views and nomenclature which are now coming into vogue. Can it be wondered at that there are discomfort, foreboding, and alarm? Can we be surprised when hands are stretched out to steady the ark of the Lord? But there would be no anxiety if only Christian folk would distinguish between the things that can and that cannot be shaken. The statements of our belief can be shaken. Our views, we will say of inspiration by dictation, may have to be modified. Creeds which our fathers held dear, as the Athanasian, may have to be laid aside. But none of these affect the truths which they have embodied and held. As Dr. Goulburn puts it: "It is only the principles of Truth, Goodness, and Right which are to last for ever. The forms in which these exhibit themselves will necessarily vary with the age and state of society." That the Bible is absolutely sovereign among books, clothed with imperial splendour, echoing with the divine voice, and crowned with the halo of divine glory, is always apparent, whatever theory you have of inspiration.

There is one item of good advice which may as well be stated here. Beware not to talk about your doubts. Some people hawk their doubts about as beggars in Eastern lands hawk

around their sores to extract sympathy and halfpence. If you are in doubt, there is no reason why you should not consult some one who is competent to advise you, but do not get into the way of posing as a doubter in the mistaken idea that a doubter must be an intellectualist. The only way that some people can contrive to be accounted clever is that they will not accept anything with the common herd. When people really doubt, it is an agony too great to be talked about. It is like a family sorrow, that is only discussed when the doors are shut and the family are alone. Besides, you have no right to scatter thistledown. You may state a case or ask a question that may disturb some young soul through long years. Any fool can drive a hammer through a Murillo, or break a superb window of mediæval glass ; but it takes genius, patience, and laborious industry to undo the harm wrought in a thoughtless hour.

When doubts assail, it is wise to plod on in the old paths, doing what is right, and continuing to maintain the sacred habits of obedience, meditation, prayer, and service. It is always right to be good and to do right. It is always right to pray to God. It is always right to be kind and loving, generous and pure, just towards men and righteous towards

God. You can always be orthodox in loving and living, whatever may happen to your orthodoxy of belief. The Lord Jesus may always be your Master. It is always right to pray to Him for help. There may be times when in your bewilderment you cannot find help, but you can always give help. Whatever you do, refuse to allow doubt to alienate or divide you from the Father of Lights. It is not by agonising over your difficulties, but by communion with Him that all your storms will subside and become a great calm. What you cannot understand, leave for a time and go along your way in perseverance and obedience, and some day, all unexpectedly, He will take you to His bosom, and say : " I could not explain this before, because you could not understand ; but now see, it is thus and thus." In His light, we see light.

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The travellers on the King's highway find that very often it lies directly through *the battle-grounds* of the world, that call to the soldier-element in us all, and we dare not shirk the appeal. Your lot may lie amid the green pastures and still waters ! Be thankful that it is so ! Yours the sweet song of the weaned child ! But this is not allotted to us

all. Here in the grounds of this noble residence there is a unique contrast, which will serve to illustrate this point.

We have been walking on a high ridge among the firs; suddenly, on our left, the ground slopes, and through an avenue of yews, standing at sentry-duty on either side, we descend to a lovely flower-garden, ensconced in a fine yew-hedge some five feet in depth, and except where it rears itself into arches and buttresses, some six feet high. We enter and leave through these noble arched entrances—the fitting gateways to this second Paradise. Pursuing our way down the four successive levels of sward, on which the western sun, through the surrounding trees, is shedding shafts of light, we pass between masses of lavender, lavender-nepeta, and mignonette; and then my gentle hostess names the amazing variety of flowers before us, our voices mingling with the music of falling water and the hum of bees. One is inclined to envy these exquisite plants, thus sheltered and shielded from the winds, and covering these banks, facing the southern sky. But stay! Look upward to the wood behind, which shelters the garden from the north wind. Carry your eye along the ridge! Do you notice those great gaps that break the line of tree-tops? They

have been wrought by successive storms that have cut and torn their way, each leaving behind a deep ravine of devastation. That specially deep opening was caused by the fearful storm which wrecked the Tay Bridge and tore up in a single night, in this plantation alone, some three hundred trees. What a contrast between these flowers and those silver, Scotch, and Australian firs and pines! Yet who would not rather be a tree fighting the hurricane in its effort to shelter the vale and plain beneath than a flower, expending its ephemeral existence in one brief summer? "The wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more."

Be thankful, then, if you are called to stand for the right against all that injures and defiles the souls of men; or if you have not yet found your regiment in the army, and your place in it, ask that you may be entrusted with some share in the great conflict, in which angels from above and demons from the pit take part, and which has swept to and fro upon the battle-ground through all the Christian ages. "Remember," says Thomas Carlyle, "now and always that life is no idle dream, but a solemn reality, based upon eternity and encompassed by eternity. Find out your task; stand to it; 'the night cometh when no man

can work.' " And Ruskin eloquently forces home on each of us his personal responsibility : " There is work," he says, " for all of us. And there is special work for each, work which I cannot do in a crowd, or as one of a mass, but as one man, acting singly, according to my gifts, and under a sense of my personal responsibilities. I have a special work to do, as one individual, who, by God's plan and appointment, has a separate position, separate responsibilities, and a separate work : a work which, if I do not do it, must be left undone."

Fight against every wrong which is blasting human purity or happiness. Do not fight for a party as such, unless you feel that its policy will better promote the well-being of others. Choose your principle first, and then ally yourself with those who think with you, for the attainment of your common purpose. To be a partisan only, and to aid and abet one party merely because it is *your* party, is liable to mislead you. Be true to the great programme of Christ, to protect the weak, to succour the wounded and crippled, to destroy the arch-enemies of man, and to witness with unfaltering voice for all that is honourable, just, pure, lovely and of good report. This will save you from expending your strength for

nought. Never mind being misjudged. Confirm the feeble knees, and say to those that are of a fearful heart, Be strong !

"Nay, best it is indeed,
To spend ourselves upon the general good ;
And, oft misunderstood,
To strive to lift the limbs and knees that bleed ;
This is the best, the fullest meed.
Let ignorance assail or hatred sneer ;
Who loves his race he shall not fear ;
He suffers not for long
Who doth his soul possess in loving and grows strong.

"Ay, labour, thou art blest,
From all the earth thy voice, a constant prayer,
Soars upward day and night :
A voice of aspiration after right ;
A voice of effort yearning for its rest ;
A voice of high hope conquering despair."

—Lewis Morris.

But do not battle in your own might. When you come into collision with high-handed wrong ; when you are called to deal with people from whom all decency and every vestige of humanity seems expunged ; when you discover the Protean forms of evil, which resisted here, break out there, and evade the strokes of your good sword ; or when, after a long day of fighting, you are suddenly sum-

moned from well-earned rest to fling yourself again into the fray—amid the pressure of the fight you will certainly succumb, unless the arms of your hands are made strong by the Hands of the Mighty God of Jacob. Remember that in the fight you may fall in apparent failure, defeat, and death, but no effort for the right and true is ever in vain, no stroke is fruitless, no corn of wheat falls into the ground to die, but that it will spring again to yield a thousand-fold.

Oh, the pity of it, that so many amongst us, who have leisure, a competence, and even wealth, education, talent, power, are content to dream away their lives, like Tennyson's lotos-eaters, when they might be leaders and champions in the great battle against the giant evils of our time. It would be well indeed for Britain, and well for the world, if all the children of the leisured classes would consecrate themselves to these great tasks. Much of the legislation which they hate and dread would never have been proposed, if only wealth and education and opportunity had always been accepted as a trusteeship rather than a couch of ease. Let there be a war, and our gilded youth, as in the South African campaign, will pour out in hundreds to fight beside the common soldiers in a great

brotherhood of heroism! But why do not more of them hear the summons to the noblest battlefield of all, and engage in the campaign against Ignorance, Lust, and Greed! Be it only understood that the motive must not be to discover some fresh method of killing time, or creating a diversion, but a sober consecration to a great cause, like that which Wilberforce or Shaftesbury made when they chose their life-work.

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Thus the way through life moves from incident to incident, reminding us of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," told by the pilgrims. For none of us do they occur in the same order. Each of us has his own series, specially adapted to his peculiar characteristics. But from time to time there are holy resting places, where we refresh ourselves, and from which we issue to meet the new experiences of a fresh piece of the road. It is well that an Almighty Hand keeps the veil drawn, so that we cannot tell what may befall on the morrow. Only as we advance does the road unfold. "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." At the next turn of the road the whole secret may lie outspread like a

landscape at our feet. It is of no avail to be anxious. Worry will not alter the future by a single hair. The best preparation for whatever to-morrow may bring is to do well the duty of the present hour. But whatever is hidden beneath that gauzy veil, God is there, and Love, and the Golden Age, and the faces of those whom we have loved long since and lost awhile.

VII

OUR SPENDING-MONEY

We will suppose that we are about to travel on the Continent of Europe. For various reasons we are unwilling to carry any considerable sum of money on our person or in our baggage. But we arrange with one of the modern tourist agents, who has agents in every part of the world, to meet our requirements as they may arise. It is specially good for those of us, who may not possess an abundance of ready cash, when some wealthy friend steps in and says that he has calculated, on a lavish scale, the amount that we shall probably require, and has deposited this with the firm. We gladly start on our journey, knowing that at each place we have only to produce our demand, and that it will be immediately and unquestioningly met.

This is a fair analogy and may be applied to the demands which are constantly being made on us by the emergencies of daily life. Its incidents, crises, and catastrophes have been so ordered as to test and reveal us to

the uttermost. The telephone bell is always ringing in our soul, summoning us to answer some inquiry, or to take up some fresh case of need. How are these calls to be met ? It is not with us, as with a vessel bound for a long winter in the ice-closed polar seas, which is equipped or provisioned for a prolonged struggle with the elements and distance from ports of call. If such an arrangement were made with us, it would probably induce a self-sufficing complacency, which, in its turn, would generate an intolerable arrogance and pride. It is well, then, that we have not the capacity to contain sufficient supplies for our life-course, even if they could be made over to us *en bloc*. There are abundant supplies ; but, to use again the comparison of the Arctic voyagers, they are deposited in cairns, which are erected along the march, and which contain all that is needed to equip us for all kinds of emergency. They must be received and appropriated as the need arises. " Day by day the manna fell." The water-tanks of the locomotive engine may be filled in advance before the journey begins, but a supply of water may be caught up *in transitu* from the troughs that lie between the metals, over which it is swiftly passing. The latter is the most appropriate metaphor for our experience.

Our Spending-Money

We are all familiar, of course, with the atmosphere, which enswathes and environs us. We live and move and have our being in it. It contains various elements, some of which are indispensable to human life. If they should be eliminated for five minutes all round our earth, every living creature would instantly cease to exist, and the earth would become a vast sarcophagus. We are constantly inhaling the atmosphere. By night and day, from the moment of birth, the lungs, by automatic action, are opening and compressing, to receive and exhale the air on which human life depends. Sometimes we take deeper and longer inspirations than ordinarily, but there is no cessation in the process.

But the close contact between the atmosphere of the physical world and the lungs is not so close, after all, as the subtle proximity between the spiritual atmosphere and the human spirit, when once it has become vitalised and quickened. And as there are stores of nutriment for the physical life in the natural, so are there in the spiritual, but they are unavailing unless we learn to make constant use of them. We must avail ourselves of that spiritual, ethereal, and ineffable environment which supplies the nutri-

ment and vigour of the religious life. Here is the fuel of the inner fire, here the bread and water of life. "Our spirits," said the late Mr. W. H. Myers, "are supported by a perpetual indrawal of this energy, and the measure of that indrawal is constantly altering."

One of the strongest characteristics of the primitive Church was the conviction, based on experience, that it was possible for those who had accepted the Christian revelation to receive and assimilate a new quality of life, which was the very nature of the risen Christ, conveyed to the human spirit by the Divine Spirit. He was therefore described in the Nicene Creed as "the Lord and Giver of Life." Christians thus formed a new race, and were members of the divine family, partaking of influences and energies which were unknown to other men. Their elder brother and exemplar was the exalted Christ. They felt, interpenetrating and supporting them, the energy of a new life, as much higher than that of the intellect as that is higher than the physical. Eucken describes it as "the living presence of an eternal and spiritual energy." Jesus described it as "the wind of God," that cometh we know not whence and goeth we know not whither.

The beginning of Christianity was, in fact, the definite emergence of a new type of humanity. Jesus Christ, by what He was, what He taught, and what He has become to those who are united with Him, has brought a new movement, a new life, a new spirit to the world. He has lifted millions to a new level. He has created a new race. "We may assume," says Harnack most justly, "what position we will in regard to Him and His message; certain it is that from His time and onward the value of our race has been enhanced." Let us beware, then, of pressing too far our analogy between the outward atmosphere and the spiritual environment of the soul. Whilst the former may be indicated by the neuter pronoun *it*, the latter is certainly a Presence, a Person, the Presence and Nature of God, as radiating from Jesus Christ, and communicated to man through the Divine Paraclete, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ, says Paul again and again, was "a fresh creation," "the second Adam," "the First-born among many brethren." He was not only significant for what He was in Himself, but as making possible, by our sharing in His mighty dynamic, that forward leap of humanity which is the highest stage

in human development. Paul saw that the spirit of man was susceptible to this dynamic. It was able, as he puts it, to receive and appropriate *grace*, which is but another name for the inflowing of transcendental vitality, with all the wisdom, strength, and love which it stands for. To be "in Christ," in Paul's vocabulary, meant the doing away of every film of separation, so that the union of the human spirit with that Transcendent Personality might be unbroken and uninterrupted. Paul's one effort in all his writing is to impress on his readers that the life of the eternal God is "objectified," summed up, concentrated, in Jesus Christ. It pleased the Father that in Him all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in an objective human form, that of that fulness all who would might receive.

John the Divine, also, knows himself to be a partaker of that divine nature, i.e. a higher kind of vitality flowing out to man through the Word of God, and passed on to man by "the Spirit that quickeneth." And the raising of Lazarus from death to life has been truly said to be the fitting close of John's great epic of the soul. The Apostle had shown us the movement of the spirit through the new birth into the spiritual

world, had taught us how to draw water from the wells of the eternal, and to eat of the hidden manna, and finally the soul is brought face to face with the Resurrection and the Life to draw life from Him after such a fashion and in such a measure, as that death itself loses its power over the emancipated nature.

Now, if all this is true, and it is, does it not become more and more evident that we must learn the art of appropriating, not simply by one initial act, but perpetually, the very elixir of our religious life? We must breathe *out* to God our praise and adoration, our prayer and supplication, our cries for guidance and help; but it is equally needful to breathe in the supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In prayer we give God thanks for His great goodness; but we also absorb, receive, inhale, and appropriate some of that virtue and strength which are included in the Life which was with the Father and was manifested to the world.

The various experiences of human life, to which we have referred in a former chapter, perform their highest office for us, when they convince us of our helplessness, and incline us to avail ourselves of those spiritual resources which are always within our reach.

The fears that were once entertained of the approaching failure of our coal supply set science to work to discover a substitute for producing momentum and illumination. How often temptation, trial, and the failure of human sympathy have set the soul on a quest which has finally landed it on God. Well is it when we have learnt that lesson so perfectly that there has been no need for a severer taskmaster or a more rigorous discipline. In God men can find a complement for every deficiency and need.

But need it be said that it is not necessary for obtaining these things, that we should always repair to our closet, shut our door, and pray on our bended knee. We may obtain them by the instant upreach of our faith, by the opening of our being, by what may be called a long, deep, spiritual inhalation. This, as we have said, is not the whole of prayer, but it is very real prayer. It can only be exercised by those who are at one with the nature of Christ, and are accustomed to more definite and prolonged periods of devout meditation, adoration, and communion.

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All along the way of our life there are

what we may call toll-gates like those which used to arrest us in many parts of the country, until they were abolished. There would be fine work with those motorists whose one idea is to dash madly through the country, if they were being constantly pulled up and made to pay for the upkeep of the road! But on the way of which we are now treating there has been no abolition of the toll-gates. Indeed, they seem rather on the increase than otherwise, and they make very costly demands on the spending-money of the soul.

Your servant is late with your breakfast; or the telephone is very faint; or there is a break down in your morning train, detaining you for a precious half-hour; or a strike breaks out and delays the building of your home, or the ingathering of your hay, or the sailing of your ship. It is very stupid, very provoking; you are liable to nervous expenditure and exhaustion which threaten to consume the delicate network of your nervous system. Here is need for the exercise of patience and for the reinforcement of such patience as you have by an intake of spiritual energy.

Or you have to meet some great ordeal. It is an operation on one dearer to you than

life ; or the necessity of detecting and dealing with defalcations and unfaithfulness which will rupture a life-friendship or compel you to dismiss an old and valued employé. You may have to sever yourself from the party with which you have been wont to act ; to stand alone in your protest against an ill-judged war ; to plough a lonely furrow, which will expose you to derision and hatred. Perhaps it will be necessary to confess a delinquency, to ask forgiveness, and to lay your pride in the dust. Again you encounter the toll-gate, and have to pay its demand for courage. Almost certainly that will mean more than your own resources can meet, and again there must be a reinforcement of your overtaxed purse by an intake of that spiritual energy which shall enable you to fulfil your difficult duty.

Or you may be suddenly flung into a furnace of temptation before which the frail defences of your soul crackle up as wood before the flame. Your blood runs fast and hot. Is it a picture, or a book, or a suggestion, or a paragraph in a newspaper ? You feel that it is absolutely impossible to hold out. You must consent : your will and choice are under the sway of passion, like the last Monarch of France, at the mercy of the crowd which thronged the

palace, and escorted him to the Bastille. At such a time you are again at a toll-gate, and now a strong demand is made for a measure of self-control of which, again, you are not capable, and hard will be your plight unless you can obtain some reinforcement.

We need not multiply instances. So incessant and so inevitable are these demands, that none of us escape them, and most of us are perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy, as they recur. In all such cases we are in urgent need of spending-money, that we may be free to pursue our journey.

It is said of George Macdonald, that when his family was young, he adopted the following method of teaching his children to consider one another. At the beginning of every week he put the money for the family expenditure in a common receptacle which was accessible to all the members of the household. Everyone knew that it had to last the seven days; and everyone was at liberty to take what was needed for his or her use. The housekeeper must go there for the provision of the table; the girl for her dress; the lad for his books; the father for his journeying; the child for its toys. But it was obvious that if any helped themselves unduly and extravagantly, all the others would go short. May we not employ

this analogy? Shall we not say that the resources of the Almighty have been placed in the humanity of Christ, within reach of us all, to be received by a spiritual telepathy, that none may lack anything necessary for a noble life; though the parallel fails, in that there is no limit or stint, and that the divine resources are not diminished by the heaviest drains that can be made on them? Luther may divert a vast contingent for his colossal expenditure, but the supply still brims to the lips of his little Gretchen.

It would seem as though the variety of Christ's human experiences, now that His manhood is wedded with the eternal, peculiarly fits Him to succour us in each phase of experience. Boys can make their appeal to His boyhood; young men to the strength garnered in His temptation; women to the feminine and sympathetic aspect of His nature; sufferers to His endurance of pain; the poor to His experience of hunger, thirst, and homelessness; the lonely to His memory of forsakenness; the weary to His quick recollection of the sleep in the boat and the seat by Sychar's well. Each can get at Christ by a gate opening directly from his own house or grass-plat. Christ stands four-square to the world's need. They may come from the North

of Indigence, or the South of Prosperity, from the East of Youth, and the West of Age, but they are all welcome.

Here is the clue for the understanding of the temptations to which life exposes us. They present from some aspects problems of immense perplexity. One would have supposed that Divine Love would have removed every stumbling-stone from the way of our feet, but it is not so. Why ? Not simply that we may learn the art of resistance and refusal, though this is much, but that we should be compelled to discover and use our resources. Some of us would never have realised what the content of Christ was, unless we had been hard driven, not only to claim His help, but to appropriate those stores of grace which will enable us to overcome evil with good. Let that distinction be well marked. It is of immense value and significance. We are tempted that we may learn the slenderness of our own stores, and may be compelled, like the man in the parable, to go to the big house of our rich neighbour, and say : " Friend, lend me three loaves, for a wayfaring man has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him." " Then shall He from within give as many as he needeth."

Probably, the existence of evil, as it over-

shadows mankind to-day, is due to these two great considerations. First, we cannot know a thing really and deeply, unless we are acquainted with its opposite. Second, we shall never properly appreciate or claim it, until we have been compelled to face our beggared exchequer. You may live next door to a physician for long years, and have but a slight acquaintance. You watch him as he goes and comes; you exchange greetings when you meet in the street; you join in the common respect and goodwill of your neighbours. But let your wife or child, at dead of night, be stricken by mortal pain, and immediately that neighbour of yours assumes a new importance, and you suddenly awake to appreciate his resource, gentleness and strength. He grapples with the foe who is wrestling with the beloved life until he masters him, and restores to you your treasure. You never forget that night; and it gives you a friend, whom you have been taught by your extremity to understand. You and I would never have known Christ, as we know Him now, had we never passed along the way of human life. We have lost many things in our journey. They have slipped out of our possession, we hardly know how. And we miss them sorely. Sweet faces gentle presences, heirlooms of the past, trea-

sures for which we have toiled. It is as though the bandits in the old parable have been pilfering our baggage, and appropriating what we could least have spared, and leaving us what we could quite well have surrendered. Nay, it is not bandits, but the Hand of Divine Love that has been despoiling you, that you may seek and receive all back again from Him.

"All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
All what thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp my hand, and come."

There is no stint in the divine provision for human life. If there is scarcity, it is because we have not trusted the Hand that holds out its boons; or have not learnt in the moment of emergency to take what we required.

How greatly do thoughts like these ennoble and sublime the lowliest life. There is always at work an interlacing of earth and heaven, of the human with the divine, of the things that press on the senses and those which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. It is charming to watch the games of gutter children, albeit that they fill

the streets with chatter. But they give such evidence of possessing the idealising faculty. This dirty lane is a pathway through Sherwood Forest ; that blind alley is a cave where the daring Robin Hood and his merry men are lying in wait for unsuspecting travellers ; that slatternly girl is a princess, and on those dirty little wrists are matchless jewels ! What imagination does for the waifs and strays of our streets should be done for us by those spiritual aptitudes that weave the golden threads of eternity into the warp of very ordinary existence.

To adapt the words with which Thoreau concludes his rhapsody on Nature : " Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul." May we not therefore accept his advice to go and live our life, whatever it may be, determined that in it there shall be a bridal of the earth and skies. Life may be mean and hard and difficult. Let us not call it by hard names. The fault-finder would find faults in Paradise itself. It looks poor because your heart is poor. The glories of the sunshine are lost on a palace if all its living-rooms face the north, whilst a cottage facing sunwards is healthy, sweet and glad. Do not so much trouble to alter your position—alter yourself. It is not that God, or your friends, or your

circumstances are most to blame, but because you have no heaven above you, no horizon before you, no Jacob's ladder that links earth with heaven. If you are deprived of the outward circumstances, in which so many find their satisfaction, it is that you may be compelled by a sweet compulsion to turn to those simple, holy, and soul-satisfying realities which moth cannot corrupt and thief cannot steal. "It is life near the bone that is sweetest." You, at least, cannot complain of the birdlime which keeps you from soaring. The poverty of their tiny holdings on the Scotch hills has driven many a crofter to the space, and opportunity, and wealth of lands which to his fathers were only an unattainable dream.

VIII

THE COMPANIONS OF THE WAY

First, there is the Companionship of Christ, who says: "Lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end!" The way looked dark before the little flock, as they gathered together, for apparently the last time, around Him who had called them out of darkness into marvellous light, but whose presence was now to be withdrawn. It broke on them, therefore, like a peal of silver bells, the assurance that He was not going, but was to be more intimately near than ever. That there would not be one day, however dark and painful, which would not be one of "the days of the Son of Man," was good news indeed. Like a splash of colour on the hillside, this sentence lit up all the dark caverns of their fear.

Christ has been with the objective *universe* through all the ages of its becoming, preparing it as the platform or scaffolding of a spiritual structure which shall exceed and supersede it. He has been with *mankind* from the earliest inception of the human race, through all its sorrowful experiences, its wars and revolu-

tions, its bitter disappointments, and agonies. These things had to be, as the fever and pain which accompany the cutting of a child's teeth. But He is patiently piloting us through these experiences, until that new humanity shall be introduced of which He is the first-born and glorious specimen. "For the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." He has been with His *Church*, chosen from among men not for their worthiness, nor for their exclusive benefit, but that they may help in the development of His purpose of redemption. The pilgrimage has been long and weary, but He has accompanied the pilgrim-host, step by step, mile by mile, through the darkness of the blackest nights and the scorching heat of the most trying days. Nor will He forsake us, until we reach our home.

But it is the application of these words to our individual lives that claims us now. Each of us has to tread "the way" from the cradle to the grave; and there is not a stage in the path that does not need the presence, companionship, guidance, and help of Him who travels beside us in the greatness of His strength.

There are the days of *Childhood*. With uncertain feet, the young pilgrim starts on his way, the whole course of which is known only

to Omniscience. Childhood was ever dear to Him. The olive-skinned children of Palestine played their games around Him as He sat in the market-place to watch them. They lingered within earshot of His voice, loved His parables, and read Him with intuitive understanding. Boys would trudge for miles, with luncheons of barley bread and cured fish in their wallets, that they might assist at His great conventions. Boys and girls filled the temple cloisters and the city streets with their songs and cries when their favourite Rabbi came in lowly triumph. At any moment some wistful boy would be proud to be summoned into the inner circle of His disciples and become the text and illustration of His discourse. The children of the world have ever been dear to God. They are the flowers of which the rest of us are blades of grass. One hundred and forty-four thousand are the first-fruits of the harvest of humanity. And beside each child the Great Shepherd passes, as it issues through the Beautiful Gate of Childhood's Temple to enter on the valleys of weeping, or climb the happy slopes of the mountains of joy.

Adolescence may claim the same compan ionship. At that period the mind awakens to question all mysteries ; to seek for whatever

is lovely to the eye, pleasing to the ear, and attractive to the taste. The aurora dawn of love fills the sky with warm and ruddy colour. The young soul is passing out under new heavens, and into a new earth of experience. It is as when a delayed spring suddenly bursts into summer. But the paths are treacherous, and the boulders slippery, if the young soul essays to tread them unaided. There is no fear for it, however, when once it welcomes that holy Presence, and submits to its gentle constraint. There is no beauty, truth, or love in the world that does not emanate from Christ. He is the Word of God, in whom these qualities abide eternally, and to have found Him is not only to possess them, but to be able to appreciate them.

In *Early Manhood or Womanhood*, we stand in a vestibule, out of which doors open in every direction, and it is perplexing to know which of them to choose. To have Christ beside us is to be saved from irreparable mistake. He is wisdom to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to those that turn the battle from the gate. He is more to us than Arthur could have been to the Knights of the Round Table. The kingdom which He asks our help to found shall last for ever!

The temptation of *Middle Life* is to lose

faith. Our skies, once ruddy with dawn, have become grey ; friends have proved disappointing ; the schemes which we cherished have miscarried ; the parties with which we co-operated have shown themselves unsympathetic ; we begin to wonder whether we have not been over-sensitive, over-scrupulous, and if to take care for ourselves is not the best policy, after all ! At such times the companionship of Christ is invaluable. It arrests the paralysing pessimism which has begun to eat into the soul of our goodness and the energy of our resolve. We are bidden to keep watch with Him during the dark night. He accosts us as His companions in tribulation and patience. He tells us that He has overcome the world. He calls us to be our purest, noblest, and strongest. And as we watch Him and find that He does not break a bruised reed, or allow Himself to be faint-hearted or discouraged, we gird up the loins of our mind, and prepare to stand to our post though the heavens fall.

In *Old Age* the same Companionship is our very present help. When we get near the sundown, we are apt to be pursued by regrets that life has amounted to so little. We miss, in growing loneliness, the companions and associates of earlier years. It seems as though the world is out of joint, and that the former times

were better than these. Then Christ draws near, and chides us for carrying the load of these wearing anxieties. He tells us that the government is on His shoulders, and that He will not fail, nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth, while the isles wait for His law. As soon as we have this assurance and realise that the keys of the earth, and life, and the future, are at His girdle, and that the responsibility of bringing the world right is His business and not ours, the peace of God returns to us. We ask that we may speedily see the consummation of His plan ; but, if not, we are content to entrust all things to His omnipotent hands. This is our only prayer : " Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children ; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and the work of our hands establish Thou it."

In one of his essays, Emerson criticises the Christian Church for " dwelling with noxious exaggeration on the person of Jesus." He urges that the emphasis should have been laid on His teaching, and its appropriateness to all conditions in all ages. But, in the *first* place, the teachings of Christ are so inextricably connected with His Person, that it is impossible to disassociate them. He is perpetually saying :

" I am the Light of the world " ; " I am the Good Shepherd " ; " I am the Way." And, in the *second* place, the devout and penitent heart is conscious that the constant recognition of His presence is not the figment of a fancy, but an incomparably valuable asset in the working forces of its life. They who, through faith, have been permitted to enjoy it, knew that to forfeit it would be to lose the Sun from the Heaven, Heat from the Fire, and Love from the Home.

In " Yeast," Charles Kingsley tells how Nevarga, dirty, habit-stained, morally and spiritually broken, feeling utterly defiled, knelt in the desert by a furze-bush, and lifted up his heart to God, and cried for help. Then he rose up like a man and spoke right out into the dumb, black air, and said : " If Thou wilt be my God, if Thou wilt be on my side, good Lord, who died for me, I will be Thine, villain as I am, if Thou canst make anything of me ! " And Kingsley says that the furze-bush began to glow with sacred flame, and there in the desert Jesus Christ found a new companion and made a new friend.

For opening manhood, *this* is Christ's message : " Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not

leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

This for the close of life's pilgrimage :— " The God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."

But this is not all. When speaking with Nathanael, the Master said that he was entering an age in which heaven would be open and angels would ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. Obviously, He was referring to the ladder that knit the poor moorland, where Jacob lay, with the highest heaven. The fugitive learnt on that night that no human being is so mean or so forlorn, but that God is willing to keep open communications with him, receiving the angels of his prayers and tears, and responding by commissioning His angels with divine guidance and help. In the case of Nathanael, his meditations and prayers beneath the fig tree were the angels that ascended, whilst the good Philip, hastening to him with the tidings of the Christ, was one at least of the angels whom God sent in reply. That ladder still stands beside us when we kneel in prayer, whether with Paul in the prison or

Jonah in the hold of the merchantman, or Peter on the roof of the tanner's house. There is no place from which the angels may not go up, and to which they may not descend.

Obviously that ladder represented the dual nature of Christ, which unites our earthliness with the heavenly and eternal world. Let us exchange the figure from a ladder to a bridge, as was the habit of mediæval saints. Christ bridges the gulf between earth and heaven ; and it may be that as our prayers cross that bridge from this side, holy beings come to help us from the other :—

"O weary ones ! ye may not see
Your helpers in their downward flight ;
Nor hear the sound of silver wings,
Slow beating through the hush of night !
There are, who, like the seer of old,
Can see the helpers God has sent,
And how life's rugged mountain side
Is white with many an angel-tent."

The Scriptures make frequent reference to the ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation ; and it may even be that whilst we send messages through our Lord to those whom we have loved and lost awhile, trusting Him to give or withhold them as He deems best, so some-

times He entrusts some healing, helpful, and delightful ministry to those who find a deeper bliss than even Heaven could yield them in helping us to thread our way through menacing difficulties, to mount up with wings, to run without being weary, to walk without being faint. We must note carefully that such ministry is only in union with the Son of Man. Our prayers ascend and God's answers return only upon the ladder or bridge of His mediatorial nature. We have no right to speak to or command the inhabitants of the other world in a direct or authoritative manner. To attempt this would be to fall into error; but when the communion of saints is strictly limited to the mediation of our Lord, we need not dread the intrusion of error. "Ye are come to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator."

We are traversing our mortal career in the presence of a great multitude of witnesses, whose faces look down on us, like the cherub-faces in Tintoretti's pictures, which in the distance seem like a golden cloud of glory and beauty. And if Jesus should sometimes bid one of them step down from the spectators' seats to accompany us for a few steps of our way, who shall complain? In any case, we are escorted by bands of angels,

to whom He has given charge that they should bear us up and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone.

Let this figure of Christ as the Bridge comfort us. Earth is now an annexe of heaven. No need of the old ferry-boat. We can cross dry-shod. That bridge of Christ's Divine Humanity which has made this great alteration is composed of eight arches or piers, which may be designated as follows: His Birth; His Baptism, when first He realised the full glory of His divine nature; His Temptation, when He deliberately chose not to use an ounce weight of power for Himself; His Transfiguration, when He definitely turned His face to the Cross; Gethsemane, when He united Himself more closely than ever before, as man, with the will of God; Calvary, when the At-one-ment was completed; the opened Grave, on Easter morning, whence He arose, the first of a new and glorious race; and the Ascension, when He entered the Presence of the Father in our nature. This Bridge can never be closed for repairs, or swept away by storm. Our desires and prayers need pay no toll in crossing it; and however weighty the divine reinforcements to us, not a stone will start from its place.

IX

RESTING-PLACES

LIFE is not all climbing, fighting, toiling. There are sweet vales nestling among the gaunt hills, which invite us to come apart and rest awhile. In the darkest day there are some chinks of blue. On the steepest hills there are some level places. No life is without its pause, its landings, its interspaces of rest.

First among these let us put *Nature*. "If any of my readers," says Nathaniel Hawthorne, "should decide to give up civilized life, cities, houses, and whatever moral or material enormities in addition to these the perverted ingenuity of our race has contrived, then let it be in the early autumn. Then Nature will love him better than at any other season, and will take him to her bosom with a more motherly tenderness." We will not dispute with Hawthorne in his choice of the autumn for the time of wooing or being wooed; perhaps one would prefer the precise time when the later spring is merging in the early summer. But, speaking generally, what

comfort, next to God's, is so wholly satisfying as Nature's ? How often has one thrown oneself on the sweet-smelling earth, when wearied with the clash of arms and the ceaseless conflict, saying, " Oh mother, dear mother, thy tired child comes to thy bosom for rest. Thou hast fondled and caressed millions of thy sons, but thou art as fresh and young and unworn to-day as though thou hadst only yesterday emerged from the Father's Home, where thou wast daily His delight."

We think of old Izaak Walton sitting on his primrose banks, hearing his birds sing, looking down the meadows and thinking of them as " Charles the Emperor did of the city of Florence, that they were too pleasant to be looked on, but only on holidays " ; watching " here a boy gathering lilies and lady-smocks, and there a girl cropping culverkeys and cowslips, all to make garlands suitable to this present month of May." We think, too, of Wordsworth, " the minstrel of the natural year," taking possession of his Westmorland mountains as by right of birth, that he might there exercise his vocation, and translate the language in which Nature spoke to him into the tongue of ordinary folk. We think especially of Thoreau,

as he reveals himself in his charming "Walden."

We try to imagine the latter, building his little cabin beside the lakelet—"a pure white crystal in a setting of emerald," a perfect forest mirror. We smell again, as he describes it, the pungent perfume of the surrounding pines, and bathe ourselves in the golden sunlight, in which he would sit from sunrise to noon, "growing," as he says, "like corn in the night." It is an irresistible impulse to record a snatch from one paragraph which breathes that spirit of calm restfulness that Nature gives: "Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things that I did. Morning brings back the heroic age. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with my doors and windows open, as I could by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. . . ."

Of Thoreau, Emerson said that he saw

as with a microscope, heard as with an ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. "As we read him," says Lowell, "it seems to us as if all out-of-doors had kept a diary and become its own Montagne; we look at the landscape as in a Claude Lorraine glass; compared with his, all books of similar aim seem dry as a country clergyman's meteorological almanac." But this love of Nature arose not only from hereditary endowment, but from his possession of a nature which was singularly able to detach itself from the world of men, and bring its native simplicity in contact with God's own fair world.

That latter qualification is open to us all. Detachment, purity, simplicity, childlikeness, the religious soul, these are the conditions of appreciating and loving Nature, as she has been courted and won by thousands who have never recorded their impressions in eloquent and burning phrase. Nature knows her lovers, and does not hesitate to unveil her face to them. Children will always discover those who are akin to their fresh, unsophisticated natures. Even dogs and birds, squirrels and hares, discover their lovers. The brook sings its sweetest for the ear that is willing to listen and appreciate. The woods

open new glades for the devotees who, tearing themselves from other loves, will give an undivided heart to their spell. Let us tear ourselves from men and things, from the clash of politics and the strife of competition, and let that music fill our souls which Nature makes in sylvan glades and beside the tiny rills that drop from level to level in the woodlands. What Nature has been to the writer of these lines he will never be able to explain, because ecstasies have seized on him in mountain solitudes and in forest glades which it is not lawful to attempt to describe. It is well enough to hunt for specimens, or carry pocket microscopes, or get snapshots, but at the best these appeal to the observing and intellectual faculties, whereas there is a communion of heart to heart, which lovers know, and which defies art and speech.

Let us get away from the madding crowd, as He did whose heart was so sensitive to every voice and touch of Nature, and who was so careful to adapt the natural scenery to his experiences, choosing the mountain for his temptation, the seashore for His teaching, the winepress for His agony, and the garden for His Easter.

Our Lord's sensitiveness to Nature has

been termed "the most charming aspect of His humanity." He watched the tall and splendid lily—not, like ours, white, but crimson—the reed quivering in the wind, the tender green of the first shoot of the fig tree. He built His teaching on the fold, the farm, the vineyard, and the whitening cornfields. The living well, the eastern glow, the ruddy hue of the stormy evening, the spate of the winter storm, and the homeward flight of the birds from their feeding-grounds were objects of careful observation and enjoyment. We like to think of Him loving the gorse and heather of the wild mountain, listening to the murmur of the waters down the hillsides, and scaling the higher reaches of the lonely hills that He might absorb the beauty of the far-spread landscape. To rest awhile amid the fairest scenes of natural beauty was His choicest recreation; and when He felt the Transfiguration glory coming on Him, He sought the moonlit slopes of Hermon. We are following His great example when we make much of those quiet resting-places that Nature provides.

It is perhaps worth while to make one further addition to the restfulness which Nature may secure for tired hearts and brains, and to refer to the effect that friend-

ship with the lower animals, as we term them, may bring us. We recall the Apostle John and his domesticated pet, Cowper and his hares, Dr. John Brown in "Rab and His Friends," and Thoreau with his forest companions. Take the two latter. The forest recluse lovingly records the mouse that sat on his hand, the partridge who brought him her brood, the moles who nested in his cellar, the red squirrels who made free of his corn which they ate before his face, the hares that came to his door at dusk; whilst the doctor writes graphically of his dogs—the white bull-terrier, the shepherd's dog, and the old, grey, brindled mastiff, as big as a small Highland bull, with Shakesperean dewlaps, who always reminded the doctor of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller.

It is refreshing, also, to read in one of Canon Jessopp's delightful books his disquisitions on moles and tortoises. He tells a delightful story of a tame tortoise, David, who not only came when his name was called, but exhibited something like personal attachment for his mistress, wandering into her drawing-room, climbing over the sill of the French windows, and finding his way to her feet.

Nothing could be further from our desire

than to extol that excessive and culpable fondness which heaps upon dogs and cats an altogether extravagant, fastidious, and prodigal affection, bestowing on them a quite disproportionate attention, and expending on them what would suffice to redeem many a crippled existence from the direst need. But there are opportunities of delightful intercourse between us and the dumb companions of our earthly sojourn, which need not incur reproach. On the contrary, it is altogether commendable. Mr. John Galsworthy, in an eloquent plea on the part of dogs the other day, spoke of some amongst us who are "honoured" by the friendship of the lower orders of creation. The phrase is happily chosen. We are not all worthy of that honour; but where it is bestowed, it is exceedingly precious and valuable, and a great asset among the contributories to our refreshment and exhilaration.

The Christian mystics have always had this absorbing love for Nature. George Fox said that "all creation gave another smell beyond what words can utter." Brother Lawrence received from the leafless tree "a high view of the providence and power of God." And it is thus written of Francis of Assisi: "As of old, the three children placed

in the burning fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify God, so this man also, full of the Spirit of God, ceased not to glorify, praise, and bless in all creatures the Creator and Governor of them all. When he came to a great quantity of flowers he would preach to them, and invite them to praise the Lord, just as if they had been gifted with reason. So, also, cornfields and vineyards, stones, woods, and all the beauties of the fields, fountains of waters, all the verdure of gardens, earth and fire, air and wind, would he, with sincerest purity, exhort to the love and willing service of God. In short, he called all creatures by the name of brother ; and in a surpassing manner, of which other men had no experience, he discerned the hidden things of creation with the eye of the heart, as one who had already escaped into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

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The Rest Day is, of course, another of these quiet resting-places on life's highway. Alas ! Of late years, its rest has been seriously threatened, and is being threatened. The attack comes from two sides. The first is from the invasion of the motor-car, and the craze of the week-end habit. One of the daily papers

remarked the other day that the motor-car had taken the place of the old family pew. The head of many a household in the present day will assemble his wife and children on Sunday morning for a run into the country with the same regularity as that with which his father used to summon them to church. In many cases, instead of spending with their young children the one day when father and mother could be at home with them, they are left to their nurses, who may be quite unworthy of the trust. Even now, the writer of these words can recall the absolute desolation and misery of those very rare Sundays when his parents were necessarily absent from the home; and what would have been the fate of the family life, to which, under God's blessing, he owes everything, had these modern habits been in vogue, he dare not surmise.

But from the other side, the Sunday is threatened by the decay of conventional religion. The time is not so very far distant when every respectable person was expected to go to a place of worship on Sunday. That any self-respecting people should go golfing on Sunday morning, or be seen starting for a party on the river, was unheard of. But all this is altered now, to the great detriment of society, which has surrendered one more of

those sacred habits which did so much for the morality of the elder, and the proper training of the younger, members of our families.

We freely grant that, like other religious institutions, it has been perverted. To many it was irksome and tiresome, a day of heavy burdens and unnatural restraint. One example was brought under my notice of the father of a family, who was so fearful of doing wrong, that he and his children used to sit in their chairs, doing nothing whatever during the hours of the day in which they were not attending divine service. We are all familiar also with stories, not wholly unfounded, of the prohibition of hot shaving-water, and the delivery of milk. But these are the exceptions. For myriads, through the centuries the return of the Rest Day has been fraught with untold benediction to our toiling masses, and to myriads of Christians, who, on that day, have entered into the very rest of God.

The law of septennial periodicity is written on most of the pages of natural history. Experiments on human and animal subjects yield similar results, and always establish the necessity of giving a seventh part of our time to rest, in addition to our nightly sleep. It is almost a commonplace to recall the experiment made at the French Revolution, when the Anarchists,

in their desire to expunge all trace of religion, decided that the week should consist of ten days, but found it necessary to return to the older reckoning, because the nation could not endure the prolonged strain between the rest days. It is well known that the proprietor who rests his horses and cattle on one day in the week will get more work out of them than he who keeps them at work without the seventh-day intermission. Though the same number of hours be worked in the week in each case, it is better that they should be concentrated in six days, followed by one for rest. Deep in the constitution of the universe is engraved the law of rest. Because it is there, it is obligatory on us all. We neglect it at our peril. You cannot set yourself against the nature of things, and prosper. An inevitable Nemesis will find you out. The Rest Day is placed on a level with the other obligations of the moral law, from which we infer that its basis is to be found in the very being of God, and of man, made in His image. The increase of nervous disorders, and the multiplication of lunatic asylums, are probably directly traceable to the disregard of the weekly Rest Day.

The late Mr. Gladstone was specially careful in this matter. Anyone entering his room

in Downing Street, during his tenure of the Premiership, would find that the ordinary books and periodicals of every-day use were replaced by others in keeping with the Sunday. On a Sunday evening, he writes to Mrs. Gladstone: "Although I have carelessly left at the Board of Trade, with other letters, that on which I wished to say something, yet I am going to end *this day of peace* by a few words to show that what you said did not lightly pass away from my mind." I have italicised the incidental phrase, which indicates more swiftly and emphatically than a more laboured argument could do the light in which the great Christian Statesman regarded the day. And, once more, among other suggestions, to one of his sons, then at Oxford, he wrote the following, which Lord Morley says was "the actual description of his own lifelong habit and unbroken practice": "There arises an important question about Sundays. Though we should, to the best of our power, avoid secular work on Sundays, it does not follow that the mind should remain idle. There is an immense field of knowledge connected with religion, and much of it is of a kind that will be of use in relation to your general studies. In these days of shallow scepticism, so widely spread, it is more than ever to be desired that we should

be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us."

Parents should tax their ingenuity to make the Rest Day the most delightful of the week. Sacred music, good literature of the highest quality, the family-fellowship, the wholesome walk in the country, attendance at Divine Service, and the culture of the inner life, ought to be sufficient to provide a pleasant menu for the day's consumption, without resorting to the railway excursion, or the festive gathering, which leave the soul jaded and hungry, besides having entailed needless labour on those who serve us, and who deserve our consideration. I can imagine a father who had a distinct leaning to some special line of study always reserving Sunday afternoon for the wonders of the microscope, for directing the arrangement of botanical specimens, or for discussing the fossils of a prehistoric age. What opportunities might not such an afternoon afford of driving home lessons on the traces of creative design and adaptation! Or if he were specially interested in biography, history, or geography, what vistas each of these would open! Or, when some great events were transacting on the theatre of the world, or wars being fought to their issue, how much might be done by suggesting the principles on which

to found right conclusions. To look out for the footsteps of God through our own age is a wholesome and elevating pursuit ; and Sundays spent quietly thus in the companionship of one's family, or like-minded folk, will leave us more really rested than a long and tiring day of pleasure-seeking.

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Another of these resting-places is in the understanding and confidence of *Human Affection.* In Friendship the wearied, hunted soul finds a shelter from the windy storm and tempest. From the pitiless criticism of those who have the shallowest possible acquaintance with the sincerity and purity of our motives, we turn to our familiar friends ; they, at least, will put the right construction on our actions, and will give us as much credit, and more, as we give ourselves for all that is high-minded and holy. " A friend loveth at all times, and is born as a brother for adversity." In his happy-making presence we can relax ourselves, and be absolutely free and natural. The outer coat of self-repression in which we face the driving ice-cold blast of the world may be cast off, and we can assume another suit—that of tenderness, freedom of speech, and gaiety of mood. We must choose as friends those who,

in regard to religious matters at least, think as we do. There must be a point of contact, where heart absolutely and sincerely meets heart. If we do not revolve around the same pivot, the circling interests of life cannot be concentric. Do not give yourself in intimate fellowship to those who cannot sympathise with you in your holiest aspirations, and to whom you could not naturally and easily unfold your acutest pain. It should, surely, be the subject of daily prayer to the Almighty Father that He would put the solitary into families, and bring about a fellowship of heart with some other, recalling that sweet old-time description, of which the colours can never fade, of the moment when the heart of Jonathan leapt to David's. "And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul; and Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

But, after all, the Home is the best place of all for shelter and rest. There are the green pastures and still waters, there the shadow of the rock in the scorching heat, there the strength of manhood at its best blended with

womanhood and childhood in their most artless and sweet endearments and faith. The attack which is being made on the Family is one of the cruellest that can be imagined. If it were to succeed, it would destroy the mightiest bulwark in human life against the hatred, opposition and criticism of the world. Our King has said, in wise and eloquent words, that " the foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people, and that they will only remain unshaken while the family-life of our race and nation is strong, simple, and pure." And it is true also that our homes are our best defence against the heartbreak and despair that fill asylums, jails, and dishonoured graves. The Church must enter the arena and fight for our Homes against the hand of the assailant. By permeating public opinion, through pulpit, press, and platform, with true ideals ; by insisting on the necessity of marriage among Christians being only " in the Lord " ; by her appeal for self-control, and by her advocacy of a simpler style of life and expenditure ; by her insistence that husbands and wives should bring unsullied character to the marriage-altar, and that men and women should be judged by the same code—the Church may do much to preserve the sanctity of our homes. What influence other than

Religion is pervasive enough, deep-seated enough, universal enough, to deal with the vast interests which are involved in this great question! Social reformers may deal with methods of segregation, science discuss the laws of blending and growth; educationists may train the young to right thoughts about their own natures and their responsibility for the hygiene of the race; moralists may urge to self-discipline and self-control, but only religion can comprehend them all, co-ordinate them with each other, and supply the breath of life. It becomes the Church to bestir herself, to give a loftier conception of wedlock and home-life, and so bring "a statelier Eden" back to man.

But our home-life cannot be left to chance. It needs culture, such as Charles Kingsley gave to it. "Home," writes his wife, "was to him the sweetest, fairest, most romantic thing in life; and there all that was best and brightest in him shone with steady and purest lustre. No fatigue was too great to make him forget the courtesy of less-wearied moments, no business too engrossing to deprive him of his readiness to show kindness and sympathy. To school himself to this code of unfaltering high and noble living was the work of a self-discipline so constant that, to many people, it

might appear quixotic. Justice and mercy, and that self-control which kept him from speaking a hasty word or harbouring a mean suspicion, combined with a Divine tenderness, were his governing principles in all his home relationship." We also must exercise such qualities, if our homes shall fulfil the highest ideal of restfulness.

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Last is *the Will of God.* It was the olden custom in New England, as, for instance, in Lyman Beecher's family, to observe the Sabbath from Saturday night to Sunday night, when " three stars came out." Now, there are " three bright crystal laws of life," which, like pointer stars, guide the traveller's eye as he travels along the Way: To resist the tyranny of self; to recognise the rule of duty; and to live in the Will of God. It is especially in the latter that the soul finds repose in the midst of the wildest storms that sweep life's ocean.

It was once said by Charles Lamb of one who had been grievously afflicted: " He gave his heart to the Purifier, and his will to the Sovereign Will of the Universe." Happy are they who have learned this art. With heart-purity they see God, and with wills submitted

honestly and faithfully to His will, they have a foundation for their lives on which they may build the house of life with no fear of overthrow. Let the winds blow and the storms beat upon the structure of their character, let the waters rise and become a torrent, they cannot be moved, because they are founded on a rock.

But what can better describe the rest of the soul that has built on the Will of God than those immortal lines of Dante:

> "In His Will is our peace. To this all things
> By Him created, or by Nature made,
> As to a central sea, self-motion brings."

This is Mr. Gladstone's translation, and he says: "The words are few and simple, and yet they appear to me to have an inexpressible majesty of truth about them, to be almost as if they were spoken from the very mouth of God. They cannot be too deeply graven on the heart. In short, what we all want is that they should not come to us as an admonition from without, but as an instinct from within. They should not be adopted by effort or upon a process of proof, but they should be simply the translation into speech of the habitual tone to which all tempers, affections, emotions are

set. In the Christian mood, which ought never to be intermitted, the sense of this conviction would return spontaneously and be the foundation of all mental thoughts and acts, and the measure to which the whole experience of life, both inward and outward, is referred."

Too often, when men speak of the Will of God, they mean that they are prepared to resign themselves to it, to submit to its dealings, and accept its rulings. But more than that is demanded of the truly Christian soul—namely, that it should unite itself with it, so that God's will should become the will of the creature by a thorough and blessed interfusion and blending. This position is only possible when, on the one hand, we check and quell the inclination of our own will to act as from the centre of self, and when, on the other hand, we allow God to work *in* us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

This is the great work of religion, and when we have attained union with God we retire into Him as a stronghold and sure house of defence. From all our anxieties and troubles we flee to the Rock that is higher than ourselves. We shelter under the covert of His wings. Though a host

should arise against us, in this we are confident. One thing we desire of the Lord, and that we seek after, to abide in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. And thus we prepare ourselves for and seek unto that eternal union with God, when there will be no effort to say Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven, because we shall be in heaven, and His Will will be done in us, who shall then be partaking of the image of the heavenly. "Then we shall live and move with it, even as the pulse of the blood in the extremities acts simultaneously with the central movement of the heart."

Here, in point of fact, is the essence of the Atonement. Here the human comes to be at-one with the Divine. We come back by the way of the Cross, which is the supreme emblem of the merging of the human will with God's, into that Divine Order from which we have strayed. Thomas à Kempis has rightly spoken of it as the King's high road, or as the royal pathway to Reality; and indeed there is no other method of arriving at Soul-Rest. "In the Cross doth all consist, and all lieth in our dying thereon; and there is none other way to life and very

inward peace but the way of the Holy Cross and daily dying. Walk where thou wilt; seek whatsoever thou wilt; and thou shalt find no higher way above, nor surer way below, than the Way of the Holy Cross. Turn to the heights, turn to the deeps, turn within, turn without: everywhere thou shalt find the Cross."

But, in very wonderful manner, the Cross is the gate to Blessedness. The following incident shall illustrate this: A Christian man had to undergo an operation of a very painful description. He refused to take an anæsthetic, lest he might die under the ordeal; and he desired, he said, to meet his Maker, if that were to be the case, with a clear mind. He cheerfully surrendered himself to the Divine Will and embraced it. When laid on the operating-table, his face being downwards, over the ledge of the table he could just see the ground, and discerned two pierced, sandalled feet there. Though he could not see the upper part of the figure, he knew that Christ was keeping tryst with him, and became filled with such rapture that he had no knowledge of what was transpiring, and was quite surprised when told that the operation was over. They carried him to his bed, and he lay in a perfect ecstasy for two or three weeks

till he was quite restored and returned to his ordinary avocations.

The same testimony was often given by the martyrs, who were so exalted above their physical pains as to be loath to be taken off the rack or delivered from the flame. Missionaries who passed through the Boxer riots have borne witness that they were absolutely unconscious of pain, when knives and other instruments were plunged into their flesh. They that die to themselves live unto God. Whilst they yield to the dying side, God sees to their Easter. Death is the stepping-stone to life and peace. "All things become new." Listen to this from Saul Kane, the converted poacher :—

"The station brook, to my new eyes,
Was babbling out of Paradise ;
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.
The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,
The wild hop withering in the hedge,
The lights in the huntsman's upper story
Were parts of an eternal glory,
Were God's eternal garden flowers.
I stood in bliss at this for hours."

X

THE GROWING SPLENDOUR OF LIFE

The ancient conception of the life possible to us all has never been surpassed: "The path of the just is as the shining light, or as the light of the dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." * By regular and ever augmenting degrees the light of our life is intended to grow ever brighter, until it merges in the perfect light of eternity. That there is a perfect day somewhere, where we shall attain to our full stature, become perfected even as our Master is perfect, and know as we are known, is established not only by the repeated affirmation of Scripture, and specially of Christ, but by the prophetic intuitions of the soul. It is impossible to suppose that the purest, holiest, and most unselfish natures that have cherished a sure and certain faith in the life that lies on the other side of death, which will be the perfected embodiment of our fairest and best, can have been deceived. That would be a contradiction of the noblest of instinctive beliefs,

* Prov. iv. 18.

and would be a solecism in a world, one chief characteristic of which is that where there is a wing there is air, where there is a paddle-shaped foot there is water, and where there is a baby's cry for sustenance there is a mother's care.

Yes! Beyond the fading radiance of our disappointed hopes, beyond the clouds and tempests that sometimes introduce or follow the dawn, beyond the mists that often enwrap us in their clammy winding-sheets, the perfect day is awaiting us. It may be that the next turn of the road may bring us face to face with that most blessed consummation of which the seer spoke when he said: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But though we believe generally in the sure word of the Master concerning the Father's House and the many mansions, and our places there, our heart often misgives us as we seriously anticipate the longer or shorter passage between the vigour of our mid-life and the valley that has to be traversed before we reach the shining table-lands. How about the taking down of the tabernacle! How about the dwindling number

of our comrades as the generation of which we formed a part becomes decimated by the murderous fire, and so many horses are riderless ! How about the darkening of the night and the weakening of our strength ! It is not that we dread so much the snapping of the silver cord and the sudden breaking of the suspended bowl of oil and light on the tesselated pavement, but that we shrink from the day when the strong arms that have kept the house tremble, when the teeth grind the corn with difficulty, and the music of the voice becomes low ! We repeat to ourselves the familiar words of R. Browning, but we shrink from extracting their full enjoyment because we question their absolute trustworthiness :

> " Grow old along with me:
> The Best is yet to be:
> The Last for which the First was made."

Without doubt our expectation largely affects and moulds our experience. If we become pessimistic in our outlook on life, and suppose that its light and beauty are to become gradually more and more overcast, it is almost certain that according to our want of faith it will be done unto us. Our hearts shed their hues on all things, as the light we carry in the dark lane is tinged by the tinted

glass through which it is emitted. This is a subject which calls for faith and hope to lend us their aid. Let us refuse to entertain foreboding thoughts. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. God alone knows whether there will be any prolonged interval of waiting before the barge comes out of the dim light and with muffled oars approaches the shore, and our name is called. But if there should be such, let us dare to believe that each day will bring its own sufficiency of happiness, not of the boisterous character of earlier days, but serene, calm, and blessed.

There is, for instance, the increasing vividness of spiritual vision. Even as memory fades, and the intellectual and physical forces decay, it assumes, more and more, its supreme prerogative, and stands forth as Daniel did amid the evanescing glories of Nebuchadnezzar's mighty empire. It sees more clearly than ever the significance of existence and the relative values of things. The Delectable Mountains afford a vision which overleaps the level champaign country, and sees the gleam of the golden city. We may borrow the corroborating words of another in this matter, who spoke from profound and wide experience: "The biographies which record this strange victory over decay, the uprising and victory of the

inner life, when all the rest of the man is at the point of death, are many. And they are found written, not only of the cultured and the strong in character, but of the poor, the ignorant, and the feeble-minded. We do not find this in any philosophy or religion which has denied God and denied immortality, and we find this victoriousness more distinct and developed in Christianity than in Judaism. And, moreover, this spiritual power grows stronger in proportion to the decay of the other powers, for earthly passion and aims cloud the heavenly horizon."*

The soul probably prays less for itself and more for others. The employment of the later years must be replete with intercession. The aged should serve day and night in His Temple. Not that they may not sometimes be sent forth to minister to those whom they have loved, if the Master so appoint, but that their love will probably find its readiest expression in prayer. This ministry should peculiarly be the work of those later years of life, when the activities of life must necessarily be left aside, and the soul dwells within hearing of the beat of the waves on the shores of eternity. We love with a wider and more catholic love as we grow older ; and it becomes ever more natural for prayer to

*Rev. Stopford Brooke.

arise like a fountain for those who call us friend, and all others.

The motion of the soul slackens somewhat as it approaches the port. On the broad bosom of the ocean it went full steam ahead, now the engines have slowed down and the passengers begin to gather on deck. The sailing-vessel takes in sail and approaches gently. But there is music on board, and love for our human kind, and faith in God, and hope which cannot be ashamed.

Probably, one specially important method of preserving the light and beauty of life to its close is the maintenance of human interests. We withdraw ourselves from the active conflict of the arena, but we must not leave the tiers of seats reserved for the spectators, who express their vivid interest in whatever is transacting before them, giving their encouragements to those who win and their sympathy with those who fail.

The closing years of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes illustrate this point with singular aptness. He was able to hold his Professorship till he was seventy-three, but seven years afterwards began his series of papers, which he happily christened "Over the Tea-Cups." Of these, he wrote to his friend, John Bellows: "I don't suppose that I can make my evening tea-

cups as much a success as my morning coffee-cups were, but I have found an occupation, and my friends encourage me with the assurance that I am not yet in my second childhood." He had "cleared the eight-barred gate," but this was his cheery reflection: "New sympathies, new sources of encouragement, if not of inspiration, have opened themselves before me, and cheated the least promising season of life of much that seemed to render it dreary and depressing." His sight became very dim, and he had to use the services of a secretary for nearly all his work. The black cloud of blindness hovered threateningly on the horizon, but he never abated the serene and cheerful courage with which he bore himself. "Grow old, my dear Boys, grow old!" he writes, at seventy-seven, to some old friends, "Your failings are forgotten, your virtues are overrated, there is just enough pity in the love that is borne you to give it a tenderness all its own. The horizon line of age moves forward by decades. At sixty, seventy seems to bound the landscape; at seventy, the eye rests on the line of eighty; at eighty, we can see through the mist and still in the distance a ruin or two of ninety; and if we reach ninety, the mirage of our possible centennial bounds the prospect." "I don't think *you* grow old, and in

many ways I do not feel as if I did. But sight and hearing won't listen to my nonsense. They both insist on it."

Death drew near with steps so slow, so gently graded, that the approach was hardly perceptible. Body and mind gradually lost their vigour, if measured by intervals of months, but hardly by shorter periods. He was out of doors, taking his usual walks, a few days before the end came; he was up and about the house actually on the last day; and he died painlessly in his chair, at the age of eighty-five. He had ever been full of sympathy with his fellows on board this vessel of the earth, as he once expressed it; and it was generally realised that this was no comradeship of words only, but a genuine expression of his true nature; and his careful cultivation of this to the end was one deep secret of his undimmed sunset.

But if the love of our human kind is able to illumine our lives to a ripe old age, how much more is that absorption in the will of God, which is close akin to it. Indeed, there is one notable example in which it made a life, though cut short at its meridian, grow into a full and perfect expression. The life of Sir Thomas More is a striking illustration of this. He could not give his assent to King Henry's

divorce and re-marriage, and was condemned to execution. He was one of the rarest scholars and most accomplished gentlemen of his age, to say nothing of his distinguished career as statesman and Lord High Chancellor of England.

On the eve of his execution, he writes to his daughter: "Mine own good daughter, never trouble thy mind for anything that ever shall hap me in this world. Nothing can come but that that God will. And I make me very sure that whatsoever that be, it shall, indeed, be the best. And with this, my good child, I pray you heartily, be you and all your sisters, and my sons, too, comfortable and serviceable to your good mother my wife. And I right heartily pray both you and them to serve God, and be merry and rejoice in Him. And if anything hap me that you would loth, pray to God for me, but trouble not yourself; as I shall full heartily pray for us all, that we may meet together once in heaven, where we shall make merry for ever, and never have trouble hereafter." On the day preceding his execution, he wrote with a coal to his daughter, and thus referred to it: "I cumber you, good Margret, much, but would be sorry if it should be any longer than to-morrow; for to-morrow is St. Thomas' even, and, therefore, to-morrow

I long to go to God. It were a day very meet and convenient for me." When, on the following day, he was apprised that on that morning, before 9 a.m., he should suffer death, he expressed his gratitude to the King, not only for the benefits and honours that he had from time to time conferred on him, but that by putting him in the Tower, he had given him time and space to have remembrance of his end. Then, addressing Sir Thomas Pope, he comforted him in this wise : " Quiet yourself, good Master Pope, and be not discomforted, for I trust that we shall see each other in heaven full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together, in joyful bliss eternally." And upon his departure, as one who had been invited to some solemn feast, he changed himself into his best apparel. " On ascending the scaffold, which was so weak that it was ready to fall, he said merrily to the Lieutenant : ' I pray you see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself ' ; and to the executioner : ' Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office ; my neck is very short ; take heed, therefore, thou strike not awry, for saving of thine honesty.' "

It would be hardly possible to select two men in more striking contrast to each other than these two—the Autocrat of the Break-

fast Table and Henry VIII.'s Chancellor. In their religious standpoint, their outlook on life, their culture and accomplishments, their death, there was the most complete and glaring contrast, and yet, in each case, how brilliantly the day of mortal life passed from the glorious splendour of earthly usefulness and success into those unrevealed glories which the Scriptures describe as the perfect day.

We cannot but remember one further description of the passage of the soul, not actually in experience, but in forecast and anticipation, as described in the closing pages of " The Pilgrim's Progress," which become a very field of the cloth of gold. The delineation of Christian experience in the earlier pages is as rich in colour as any of the hues which Titian and Rubens have left upon their immortal canvas, but as the great story approaches its termination the great dreamer rises to a wealth of imagery and a magnificence of diction which describe the loftiest experience of the saint with the utmost eloquence of the seer. And in the confident hope that this vision may be the happy lot of all who have thus far accompanied me, I transcribe them : " Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate ;

and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on them that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them—the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' I heard also the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying: 'Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

"Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

"There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' And after that they shut the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

"In Thee, therefore," to quote Thomas à Kempis, "Lord God, I put all my hope

and refuge ; on Thee I repose all my tribulation and anguish ; for I find all to be infirm and unstable, whatever I behold out of Thee. For neither will many friends avail me, nor strong helpers bring me succour, nor wise counsellors give a useful answer, nor books of learned men console me, nor all precious substance set me free, nor any secret and pleasant place keep me safe, if Thou Thyself stand not by me, help not, strengthen, cheer, teach, and keep me."

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